

Rockefeller fellows as heralds of globalization - working paper

Contribution Kaspar Gubler, University of Bern

Repertorium Academicum (REPAC): A Prosopographical Research Project on Students and Scholars in Pre-Modern Europe (1250-1550)

REPAC is a digital history research project conducted at the Institute of History of the University of Bern. The project's data is formed by the matriculation registers of European universities in the period from 1250 to 1550. The registers usually contain the names and places of origin of the students as well as the date of matriculation. This initial data will be enriched in the research database with biographical data on the subjects studied, professional activities and written work. The aim of the project is to create a knowledge-based prosopographical foundation for research into the activities of scholars in pre-modern Europe. This includes the reconstruction of knowledge and communication spaces, which will be supported by map and network visualisations. Although the focus is on pre-modern history, it addresses very contemporary issues of knowledge production and circulation. Studies of scholars and their careers, for example, can answer questions about the construction, cohesion and change of political and social systems of societies. The REPAC project examines such questions exemplarily for various European spaces and regions, especially for the phase from 1300-1550 under the conditions of the many upheavals and crises, but also innovations in politics, administration, culture and economy.

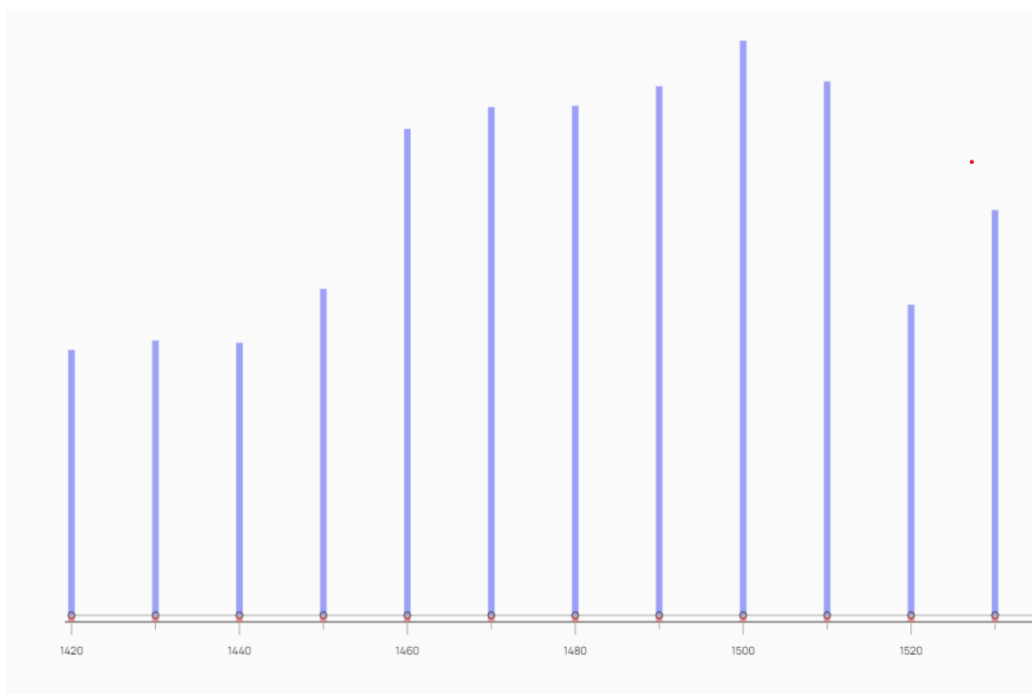
The REPAC database now contains around 70,000 students and academics with 400,000 life points at 26,000 locations (places, institutions) with chronological information. These life points and institutions also include the scholarship system (scholarship holders and scholarship providers) and in this context also donors and foundations. The scholarship system is closely linked to the financing of the university. Extensive sources on universities in the Middle Ages have been preserved. For example, founding texts or statutes that provide information about the constitution of the institution, the size and composition of the teaching staff or the teaching

content, the qualifications of the teachers or even the donors. From the end of the 14th to the beginning of the 16th century, the financing of the universities (using the example of the Old Empire) was mainly based on endowments and the use of ecclesiastical benefices. When founding "their universities", princes and cities provided financial resources (in the form of endowments) and ensured that ecclesiastical benefices were rededicated so that they could be used for studies. This initial funding had to be expanded again and again later to ensure the long-term operation of the university. However, the universities always remained dependent on further endowments and financial allocations from princes, as well as on the professors' income from their ecclesiastical benefices, from their own trading or loan transactions, and from examination fees and other fees paid by students. The meagre financial situation of the universities is a constant from the Middle Ages to modern times.

On the other hand, REPAC focuses on the financing of studies, a question that has been of fundamental importance since the beginnings of universities. Students, in turn, had to pay for their studies themselves in the beginning, unless they were lucky enough to already have an ecclesiastical benefice. If this was not the case, the student's family had to bear the cost of his studies. Gradually, a system of scholarships developed as the importance of university knowledge was recognised in society. The first and largest donor of scholarships was the Church. It created very favourable conditions for its members to attend university. Many clergy were allowed to stay away from their office for several years and continued to receive their income to live - and study. This system explains the high number of clerical students in the 14th and 15th centuries and a high 'return on investment' for the Church. And with this system, the Church was also able to influence the content of teaching and its implementation through its scholarships. However, as the influence of the church diminished in the course of the 16th century, the proportion of clerics among the students and graduates also decreased. More and more families were able to finance the studies of their offspring from their own resources. Especially since the end of the 15th century, more and more scholarships were endowed by private individuals to enable family members and residents of the same town to study. At the same time, princes and cities used scholarships to promote the acquisition of academic qualifications. Scholarships were thus economically very important, both for the individual student and in their overall volume for the universities. From the 15th century to the end of the

20th century, it is estimated that at least 4,000 to 6,000 scholarship foundations were established in German-speaking countries. At the same time, universities and faculties are endowed with further endowments in the form of books or libraries.

With the onset of the Reformation around 1520, however, there was a major break in the funding of universities and study. The Reformation briefly led to a widespread collapse of the traditional education system throughout the old empire, as Catholic benefices in Protestant territories could no longer be used for study. The collapse in student numbers at certain universities was nothing short of dramatic. At the University of Basel, for example, teaching came to a standstill for several years. Since universities were also financed by tuition fees, the Reformation thus not only affected students, but plunged many universities into a funding crisis. The following figure shows the decline in the number of enrolled students around the time of the Reformation (data: repac.ch). These figures include all enrolments in the Old Empire (around 60,000 students) for the relevant period. However, only those with higher degrees are included here. In total, around 300,000 university attendees can be expected for the period of the Middle Ages up to 1550 within the Old Empire.



After the Reformation, considerable rededications of ecclesiastical properties (which were secularised) for educational purposes can be recorded in the Protestant territories: Thus, from 1529 onwards, sovereign scholarship institutions and scholarship funds were newly created. Many princes and cities now issued their own scholarship ordinances. The confessional age thus gave scholarships a considerable boost in the Catholic territories as well, due to the confessional competition for education.

From the 16th century onwards, scholarships became an important economic factor with a strong influence on university attendance and the social composition of students. Scholarships were instrumentalised for the social disciplining of financially dependent students. Against this background, the scholarships were increasingly used by the authorities as a means to specifically promote the respective state universities, their frequency and specific denominational orientation. Belonging to a specific denomination was considered a prerequisite for receiving a scholarship in almost all foundation statutes from the 16th to the 18th century. Through these strict admission requirements, the scholarships supported the territorialisation of education by aiming to educate a scholarly elite that was as homogeneous as possible within itself. Since the early modern period, scholarships, especially doctoral scholarships, have thus been a very important instrument for the recruitment of a scholarly functional elite.

Parallel to the large sovereign scholarship institutions, more and more foundations were set up in many towns, also by wealthy citizens, very often by widows. By far the largest number of these scholarships were intended for students of theology.

As the brief overview shows, REPAC investigates pre-modern scholarship at various levels. Basically, we methodically focus on actors, institutions and spaces as well as on knowledge circulations on these levels. Within the framework of a digital and contextualised prosopography, we consider scholarship holders as one of many social impulse groups in our data material, whose mobility, biographical patterns and networks we examine, among other things, according to institutions and spaces in accordance with the criteria 'incoming' and 'outgoing'. For the scholarship holders, for example, we examine which educational institutions (Latin schools and universities) had attracted them (incoming) and in which institutions and spaces they were active as alumni and disseminated their taught knowledge (outgoing). With the help of data visualisations on geographical maps and in social and institutional networks,

the data analysis attempts to make such processes and developments visible. However, the systematic evaluation and complete presentation of the data on scholarship is still pending. It is intended to provide deeper insights into the pre-modern scholarship system and illuminate connections between study support, academic graduation and later careers. Scholarships for students are, of course, closely related to the entire educational and social structure. For more precise results on the overall functional context of the scholarship system from the Middle Ages to modern times, however, further in-depth prosopographical research on the scholarship holders, their regional, social and family origins, their economic situation and their educational and career trajectories is a prerequisite. In addition, for more precise studies on study grants and their effects, differentiation must be made according to territories or cities, universities, faculties, denominations and epochs. Some scholarships also enjoyed a particularly high reputation. This could accompany and promote a later career even after the completion of studies or graduation, and this should also be taken into account. Until around 1500, scholarship holders in the Middle Ages were also ambassadors of global history, since until that time Europe still represented the entire world for many people.

Kaspar Gubler, 02.11.2023