When Košice (Cassovia, Kaschau, Kassa) appealed to the King in 1636 to solve its dispute with the county, people asked him for protection from «the many enemies of the town»\(^1\) who were attempting to strip them of their ancient privileges. They meant especially the nobility\(^2\). However, during the following one hundred years, the most prominent enemy of Hungarian towns’ autonomy was the Royal Court itself, as well as its town representatives – the Hungarian Chamber. Maria Theresa’s reign represents the completion and – in the true sense of the word – the conclusion of this policy. The year 1755 is a milestone in the relationship between the Royal Court and Hungarian towns, especially Košice, since that year marked the town’s complete subordination to the Court.

Košice experienced its heyday in the Middle Ages, when the town was a closed and fully autonomous community, while the 16th and 17th centuries marked its economic and political decline, characterized by the

\(^{1}\) Špiesz 1983b, 13.

\(^{2}\) Németh 2008.
struggle to preserve the original form of urban society. Maria Theresa’s reign instead represented an economic rebirth. This paper wants to uncover the reasons for this positive development and clarify whether this renaissance is to be credited to Maria Theresa herself or to her court’s policies. Košice has paid an involuntary price for this positive transformation in the form of loss of original identity. The town’s radical change during Maria Theresa’s reign is due to the fact that in Košice the interest in exploiting opportunities was stronger than in any other free royal town, the latter suffering from a lack of external stimuli and a subsequent political and economic stagnation. However, in the case of Bratislava and Košice, the development of the cities was in many aspects positive and it changed both into early modern metropolises, located in what used to be northeastern Hungary.

The influence of Maria Theresa’s government in Košice was already being investigated by historians in the 19th century. Eighteenth-century Hungarian rule marked the beginning of modern and critical historiography based on the exploration of archival sources, which led to the publishing of the first positivistic works, summarising data (also) from recent history and actual topographic and geographic information about the city. This approach did not highlight the changes appeared during the Queen’s reign. Nineteenth-century authors came closer and noticed the impact of her policy on Košice’s history, focusing mainly on military

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3 After two centuries of bankruptcy due to economic and political reasons, in the 18th century, Košice became the most important city among the Hungarian royal cities.

4 Šedivý 2016; Federmayer 2013, 38-41; Federmayer 2015, 16.

5 Špiesz 1983a, 42.

6 Bratislava exploited the proximity to Vienna to its advantage, but Košice used its position and became the most important centre in Upper Hungary, thus resisting the loss of autonomy for a long time. While Bratislava lost its autonomy sooner: Špiesz 1983b, 40.

7 This is especially true for medieval research, while more recent (especially eighteenth-century) authors have gathered data from autopsies and have not applied archival research consistently. Convinced that they already have an extensive knowledge of their sources, they haven’t examined them. Bombardi 1718, 131-133; Turóczki 1729, 257-264; Tersztyánszky 1732; Bel 1779, 219-221; Korabínsky 1786, 284-291.
conflicts. As for their description of the history of Košice in the 18th century, it was written as a chronicler would, since their accounts had such a form. Another characteristic feature of nineteenth-century authors is the uncritical admiration they reserved for the Queen.

The period of Maria Theresa’s reign in Košice was characterised by the following development features (outlined in four main areas): Košice became the governmental centre of the region, losing political independence on one hand, but gaining economic prosperity on the other. Economic development is tied to the changes in the city’s population, i.e. immigration, the conflict with the old «many enemies» ending with the nobles’ victory, the town’s nationality change on the map, and the tripling of its population and social diversity. The growth of the city’s economy and population led to a new urban shape. The town’s development brought down the city walls, the Gothic town was destroyed and Košice turned from an urban fortress into a shantytown. The last change involves the Church and the town’s cultural climate: Košice became catholic again and at the same time a university was founded, which significantly influenced the cultural development of the city.

From the Middle Ages until the middle of the 18th century, Hungarian royal cities, including Košice, enjoyed wide autonomy despite their decreasing political power in early modern times. The change in 1755 is referred to as the official end of this autonomy in its original form. By this year, the systematic process of gaining control over the cities (preceded by non-systematic and spontaneous attempts) was over. This process began in 1681 after the Diet of Hungary in Sopron. In 1755, the time of commissioners ended and they were replaced by written supervision management. The regulation of 1755 governed the relationship between Maria Theresa’s court and the cities until after the end of her reign, up to the first half of the 19th century.
Unlike the western part of the Habsburg monarchy, Hungarian towns were not under direct control of the Habsburgs during the centralization process of the 17th century. In this process, the King was represented by the Hungarian Chamber or Spiš Chamber\textsuperscript{12}, which was in fact responsible not only for the economic matters but first and foremost for the political ones. The share of the Chamber resulted, from the economic point of, as property of the King – *peculium sacrae coronae* –, but was administered by the Hungarian Chamber itself\textsuperscript{13}.

Due to the professionalization of the city’s authorities and representation – the municipality, these self-governing authorities grew distant and left the local population. This was a natural consequence of the pressure exercised by the State authorities, which, as a condition to enter the local governing bodies, required a thorough knowledge of law, languages and a university education. In Košice all senators knew Latin, unlike other smaller towns, where an educated nobility with properties in distant regions started occupying positions in the municipality. Similarly, in Bratislava, the bourgeois elite could occupy these positions without being replaced by foreign scholars and officials. In Bratislava, elections were not carried out completely according to the Chamber’s rules nor in the spirit of Catholicism. In the second half of Maria Theresa’s rule, to increase the attractiveness of the local authorities, the Chamber allowed a significant increase in salaries, especially in some cities – Košice included.

\textsuperscript{12} Halaga 1958; Gusarova 2014, 264-265.

\textsuperscript{13} From 1691 until about 1740, the court promoted its interests in the Hungarian towns through special commissioners from Vienna. They always arrived as King’s representatives when the polls were held or some part of the city council was renovated. They had the right to nominate their own candidate in the polls. If the commissioners did not attend the elections, the report was sent in writing. The commissioners confirmed the elected members of the municipality. They represented the King, more specifically the Hungarian (Royal) Chamber. The Hungarian Chamber, as the economic office that managed the King’s property in the royal towns, also interfered in political, religious and self-governing matters. The King used this office for the political agenda because he did not have another Hungarian political office under his influence. Nothing changed in the Hungarian Chamber with the establishment of the Royal Vice-Regency Council in 1723, which took control of the city until the decision of Joseph II. Špiesz 1983b, 30-31, 34.
On the other hand, remuneration in kind and by sharing the cities’ in-kind income and rent was abolished. City officials started to receive only a salary and no other kind of income from business activities. Until then, this was typical only for some city employees, such as solicitors, but not for the local politicians.

In the 1730s, the Royal Court definitively took away the city’s right to issue guild rules. Change was just beginning to happen during the reign of Maria Theresa. Guilds with old statutes should ask the King (in this case the Queen) for new rules. Control in the economic area came earlier than in the political and religious ones. By the end of the 17th century, the commissioners’ interference and control on economic affairs were very strong. Later, they were replaced by compulsory quarterly reports. Nonetheless, the control exercised over the Hungarian cities, including Košice, wasn’t tight, as opposed to the western parts of the monarchy, where royal commissioners were still present. The state authorities’ efforts to reach a balanced budget were positive, enabling the cities to get quickly rid of debt despite the estate uprisings. In urban management, new concepts and practices were introduced from economics and accounting. Unlike in the western part of the monarchy, the court kept the Hungarian cities’ judiciary without intervention.  

In the 17th century, we register attempts to influence both the elections and the distribution of the most significant positions in the municipality of Košice, but until the last decades of the century these attempts were not successful and the town defended its autonomy from the King. The first full-scale interference occurred in the 1670s. Despite its results being temporarily counteracted by the Hungarian estate uprisings, the trend persisted, became established, and was fully developed in the 18th century. The greatest progress was achieved during Maria Theresa’s reign. In 1755, a year which is both symbolically and actually significant for the autonomy of Košice, the direct supervision over the municipality’s elections and the town’s finances, usually carried out by commissioners

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15 Supervision management, which replaced the commissioners, also had its positive impact. The last two estate uprisings, which influenced the functioning of the city for
was replaced by regular reports on the state of the town that the municipalities had to send to court.16

Most cities had been subject to the Royal Court since the end of the 1730s. Only Košice had been an exception – it had not given up self-government until the mid-1750s. Neither the commissioners nor Maria Theresa’s order of 1748 had brought them to do it. Even when Košice finally accepted the Chamber’s terms, which allowed the then self-government officials to hold their office for life, they did not want to accept under any circumstances that the City Council (the higher authority) would not elect the Elected Community (a lower authority). They also refused to see former members of the city council (usually the mayor) becoming “tribunes” of the people. However, in principle, the Chamber refused to move people from higher offices to lower ones. Even though commissioners did not use to travel to cities at that time, they started to visit Košice once again. In the early 1750s, commissioners introduced drastic changes in the city’s self-governing authorities, especially when they sent many people back to higher offices. In 1755, the city was complaining that there had not been a free election since 1747, and that the senator in the city council was a man elected by the Commission. The city asked the Chamber to stop interfering in the future, but the Queen and the Chamber did not change their condition. In the end, Košice surrendered. In August 1755,

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16 The terms of the elections were based on tradition. During the reign of Maria Theresa and before her during the reign of her father Karol, the city received a letter every year. Approval of the elections was given in this letter. Cities were also required to send copies of the protocols to the Chamber immediately after they were made. Špiesz, 1983b, 40.
the Chamber issued a General Regulation for the Cities, which definitively conformed the royal towns to the same standard of autonomy and introduced a new procedure: the selection of city officials and responsible officials from the members of the city council. Even though centralization was approximately the same in all royal cities\textsuperscript{17}, in Košice we can see evidence of the city’s expropriation, a form of nationalization at the hands of the State. The town changed its purpose and became a centre where the state could fulfil its role: Košice became the administrative centre of a modern country’s province.

The period of Maria Theresa’s reign is clearly the period of economic growth for Košice. This was caused by political reasons, self-generated factors, economic reasons and eventually by the above-mentioned transformation of the town during Maria Theresa’s reign. The 16th and 17th centuries witnessed constant military conflicts. In addition to that, in 1711, at the end of Francis II Rákóczi’s uprising\textsuperscript{18}, the town was even struck by an epidemic as a direct result of the uprising itself. During the following decades and during Maria Theresa’s reign, the war avoided the territory of Upper Hungary and thus also Košice. But the absence of war is not a satisfactory reason to understand the significant economic growth of Košice, all the more so since other free royal towns in the same region\textsuperscript{19} did not register a significant growth. A more significant reason for this growth consists in autogenetic factors, which include the productive, trading, and human potential of Košice. These factors were also the reason for significant immigration from western regions of the mon-

\textsuperscript{17} The attempts by the Court should lead to unify municipal self-government – the same bodies, the same poll, the same term of office – according to Bratislava’s model. Only a few elements from the original reform were altered for the resistance of the cities. We have a case for Košice, quite rare in Hungary (we can also point at the case from Modra in 1746 and from Pezinok in 1761), when Maria Theresa directly hit the composition of the municipality and ordered the city council to accept a specific person as member. Špiesz 1983b, 32-34.

\textsuperscript{18} Duchoň 2005, 70.

\textsuperscript{19} Halaga 1984, 54.
archy and from abroad. Nevertheless, the burgher rights applications registered in the town books were not from state employees or church and military officials, but from craftsmen and traders. The third reason for Košice’s economic growth were the economic circumstances, which were significantly different from the Middle Ages when the town’s economy was dependent on the long-distance trade between the Baltic and the Black Sea.

The recovery of the country’s economy, however slow in comparison with Austria and the regions of the Kingdom of Bohemia (Czech Kingdom), was a significant impulse for Košice, thanks to the development of Hungary’s domestic and foreign trade. In fact, the Hungarian market was expanding southwards because of the Ottoman wars, resulting in trade agreements with the Ottoman Empire. The last reason for Košice’s growth was its makeover into an administrative centre. The town’s society was in fact supplemented with office employees and the like, who were in the town to transform the city into a regional administrative centre.

Among other things, this resulted in the development of the town and also in the paying off of the 1711 estate uprising debts. It was only the economic prosperity of Košice during Maria Theresa’s reign that made the liquidation of this debt possible, but the new economic situation influenced the city’s self-confidence and future economic development, as we can see from the careless way the town’s debt would be financed in the future.

For a very long time Košice was recovering from the economic consequences of Francis II Rákóczi’s uprising (1703 – 1711). During this period and immediately afterwards, the town had to pledge 21 out of its 30 vassal villages. The debt of Košice did not increase, but was not reduced

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20 The most welcome newcomers were craftsmen and their families. In the period 1733-1790, 588 craftsmen settled in Košice, i.e. 60% of all newcomers in the city. Špiesz 1983b, 72.


23 Halaga 1967, 49.
either, for the following three decades of the century and in 1735 it was still amounting to 43,000 forints. Košice was unable to repay this debt despite the fact that it was not too high, especially considering the town’s potential during Maria Theresa’s reign. However, in the time of prosperity which fell on the period after 1740, unlike other towns, Košice chose an investment strategy at the expense of immediate debt repayment. The town’s representatives estimated a higher potential and increased the debt investing in municipal enterprises and in the renewal of the city’s economy. In figures, that meant a debt increase of 65,000 forints in 1748 alone. That was the peak of the town’s debt in 18th century, after which it was repaid in a relatively short time in installments of 10,000 forints a year. This was possible thanks to the profits from previous investments. The debt was finally liquidated in 1761 and from that moment on, that is in the second part of Maria Theresa’s reign, the city’s economy showed high profits which could be invested in urban development and to support art and culture. In this respect, that is as far as debt repayment is concerned, Košice became an exception in comparison with other Hungarian towns of present-day Slovakia24.

Immigration to the town caused many changes, which occurred during Maria Theresa’s reign. The Hungarian town was unable to maintain the same number of inhabitants by itself and became dependent on immigration. While in other towns immigration from the countryside was significantly prevalent, Bratislava and Košice had a steady percentage of German inhabitants due to German immigration from abroad and from the German-speaking parts of Hungary25. But the relatively high percentage of Germans in Košice rapidly decreased due to the growth rate of the overall population, which peaked to 300% during Maria Theresa’s reign26. The new inhabitants found employment in the production areas of the

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26 The number of inhabitants of Bratislava tripled during the 18th century, which was the biggest increase in Slovakia, but Košice also had a similar increase. The number of homes increased significantly from 314 in 1720 to 927 homes in 1785. Špiesz 1983b, 69-70.
town, which had just started developing at that time. Another significant part of population worked in services, most frequently in the households of middle and higher classes. Immigration influenced the nationality map of the town’s population, favouring an increase in the number of Hungarian and Slovak inhabitants. Social differences were not as significant as in Western Europe, but the differentiation of the population kept increasing. A special chapter in the town’s history is the conflict with the nobility, which was most intense in the 17th century and which had already been dealt with during Maria Theresa’s reign. The town became a place for self-realization in the eyes of both foreigners, nobility, officials and soldiers, while the original population was relegated to the background.

During the period from 1740-1780, a significant development of the town occurred. After a period of architectural and urban stagnation, the city’s Gothic architecture had to change. Aristocratic palaces replaced several medieval houses and purpose-built buildings were constructed to host state and local offices, even at the expense of original Gothic burgher houses. The new urban architecture reflected the conflict, or rather the result of the conflict, between bourgeoisie and nobility, which was won by nobility and marked by the construction of palaces and county houses, like in the case of the Abov county (Hungarian: Abaúj). The quality of artillery in the 18th century made the town walls redundant. Unlike many other towns which did not need their town walls to be demolished, the urban development of Košice made apparent that the town growth was hindered by town walls.

For the town to grow, it was not enough to build in the suburbs at the expense of the countryside. The expansion of the inner city tore down

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27 For example, the county’s administration divided the contributions for cities within the county and the ratio was disadvantageous for cities. Špiesz 1983b, 19-20; Németh 2008.


29 Halaga 1967, 59-60.

30 Wick 1941b.

31 Orosová-Žažová 2011, 66.
the town walls and proceeded towards the suburbs. In this period Košice acquired a new appearance also due to the change in its military. During the Turkish wars, it was the headquarters of Upper Hungary’s captain, who led the defense of the area from the city32. Back then, Košice was surrounded by two sets of city walls and its urban fortress character was significantly strengthened. Despite the end of the Turkish wars, the military element in the town was highlighted by the construction of military barracks. After 1711, the barracks were replaced by a large military lodging house, seat of the military offices. Downtown, large buildings were constructed to house soldiers and for other military purposes. The large number of soldiers and officers had a naturally stimulating effect on the town’s economy and its social life33.

Centralization and “political recatholization”34 went naturally together, which brought about a significant religious change in the town. Recatholization was not achieved only through political instruments such as centralization and state control of the town35, but also thanks to missionaries, mainly Jesuits36, who carried out the actual “religious recatholization”37.

The victory of recatholization was also visually apparent (the town looked different)38. During Maria Theresa’s reign, the Protestants could not build any church nor church buildings in Košice, only wooden ones without bell towers. Furthermore, Protestant buildings had to be built on

33 Wick 1941a.
34 Harčar 1942, 38-39. To integrate Catholics, commissioners placed people who did not have communal rights nor lived in the city in municipal councils. They were usually officials of the Chamber or its other offices. Commissioners had a special interest in city’s notaries who could only be Catholic. Špiesz 1983b, 34-36.
35 Wick 1936.
36 Wick 1931a; Donnelly 2000.
37 Stolárík 1995.
38 Kowalská 2001, 186; Wick 1928; Wick 1931b.
the outskirts\(^\text{39}\) of town, to preserve the skyline and appearance of Košice as a Catholic town representing state power.

In addition to that, during Maria Theresa’s reign, the ratio between Catholics and Protestants changed drastically. In Košice, Protestants were divided into two groups\(^\text{40}\), a predominantly German-Slovak Lutheran group and a predominantly Hungarian-Slovak Calvinist group. But two thirds of the town’s population, at the end of Maria Theresa’s reign, had become Catholic. This was the result of the political and religious re-catholization of the time and of the immigration from the countryside and surrounding areas.

Thanks to the Jesuits\(^\text{41}\) and the bishop of Eger, Košice became a university town as soon as the 17th century\(^\text{42}\), but the estate uprisings slowed down academic activities, which fully developed only in the 18th century\(^\text{43}\). During Maria Theresa’s reign, university reached its peak and had the greatest influence on the town’s development. In this period, Košice’s role as a university town became more and more important\(^\text{44}\), with all the related impacts on society, culture and economy. In the last decade of Maria Theresa’s reign, however, there was a turn in events caused by the abolition of the Jesuit order and the town’s loss of its university status in 1777\(^\text{45}\). But the economic and cultural influence on the city lasted well into 19th century, because the university remained an important intellectual centre, which even influenced the political course of events at the beginning of the 1848/1849 revolution\(^\text{46}\). The university was also con-

\(^{39}\) Wick 1931b, 81.

\(^{40}\) Fedorčák 2012b.

\(^{41}\) Fedorčák 2014b.

\(^{42}\) Farkas 1895; Farkas 1901.

\(^{43}\) Fedorčák 2012a.

\(^{44}\) Fedorčák 2014a.

\(^{45}\) Halaga 1956.

\(^{46}\) Fedorčák 2013.
nected to the extensive activities of its printing house, which was linked to a new private press emerged during Maria Theresa’s reign.

After the University of Košice and the Jesuit theatre ceased to exist, the need for a new theatre emerged and was satisfied by a new municipal theatre, built by the end of Maria Theresa’s reign. Talking about theatre, it is impossible to forget the anti-government tendencies related to the municipal theatre in Košice and linked to city’s new non-denominational communities. During Joseph II’s reign, this was reflected in their political control. During Maria Theresa’s reign, culture in Košice experienced intense growth in all areas and was supported by economic development. It was also reflected in the architecture and decoration of buildings, which changed the town’s character significantly.

In this paper, we have focused on the main reasons for the changes experienced in Košice during Maria Theresa’s reign. As a natural consequence of the rapid development which the town experienced during this relatively short period, besides the prosperity and new opportunities, there were also negative consequences on the original population. Highlighting these changes and their causes was one of the goals of this publication and it is a challenge for further research on this issue.

47 Ferko 2013.

48 The study was realised under the project VEGA No. 1/0212/15 Places of Košice Memory (people and history), and under the project APVV-16-0383: PamMap: Comprehensive memory portal and historic towns atlas of Slovakia (Bratislava and Košice).
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**Contributions in miscellanea**


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