

The Practice of Municipal Self-Government on the Example of Košice Statutes from the 17th Century: An Overview

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Abstract

The focus of the study is on the self-government of Košice in the early modern period. The main sources for the research are the city statutes from the 17th century, which are representing the functioning of the urban community. Statutes are valuable historical sources that allow us to trace the way in which conflicts were resolved, finances were regulated, and city administration was managed in a given period. The study offers a glimpse into the history of Košice in the early modern period and also sheds light on the ways in which the urban community organized and governed itself by norms that were created according to the citizens' current needs. The aim of the study is to examine selected questions regarding the functioning of the local government of early medieval Košice through the statutes adopted by the outer council. The main focus is on the circumstances of the creation of the statutes and their content: a quantitative overview of the number of statutes, the frequency of their adoption and their thematic focus in order to gain a deeper understanding of the functioning of the administration and law of the urban community. The text presents the process of the creation of statutes and discusses their role in the administration of the city. It provides an insight into the legal structure of Košice in the 17th century.

Keywords: Košice; urban community; early modern period; city statutes; self-government

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Introduction

Medieval and early modern cities represented a unique model of settlement within the feudal society of the time. The subject of municipal self-government is vast and offers both advantages and challenges in defining the scope of research. In this paper we have chosen to focus on the study of city statutes. These institutional legal sources have considerable value and can serve as a means of reflecting on the internal mechanisms of municipal administration and contemporary events. Statutes defined certain rights and obligations of residents and municipal authorities, provided a framework for municipal governance, and were crucial tools for ensuring legal stability and order within the community. Their study provides a window into the social structures and values that shaped life in medieval cities.

The research of municipal self-government is one of the most popular areas of urban studies. Its appeal stems not only from its intrinsic interest and the diversity of the phenomena it examines, but also from the great numbers of official documents preserved from the early modern period. However, diverse approaches to the subject and the lack of syntheses on Hungarian municipal self-government complicate comparisons and summary conclusions.

The aim of this study is to present the question of the functioning of Košice's early modern self-government on the basis of legal sources. The starting point of this research is the governing bodies of the municipal self-government, their roles and competences. One of the key research questions is whether the resolutions of the elected Košice municipality were statutes in the true sense of the word, or whether they functioned more as recommendations to the city council. The answer to this question lies in examining the circumstances of the adoption of the statutes and in their formal analysis. Furthermore, the classification proposed by Ján Kúkel, who categorised the statutes of Bratislava according to specific criteria, serves as a framework for this analysis. Comparisons with the statutes of other Hungarian cities, especially Trnava and Bratislava, which are also included in the study, provide a broader perspective on the subject. The study also attempts to classify Košice's statutes on the basis of content analysis.

The core of the paper consists of three chapters. The first chapter provides a brief historiographical overview of Hungarian cities and Košice in particular. The following chapters are more detailed and divided into subchapters. The second chapter, entitled 'Municipal self-government in the Middle Ages and early modern period', explains the terminology related to the key roles of municipal officials. Subchapters examine the governance structures of Hungarian cities, focusing on Košice, Bratislava and Trnava. The third chapter is devoted to statutes, with subchapters dealing with the statutes of the aforementioned Hungarian cities, focusing on their classification and content analysis.

The study is based primarily on the statutes of Košice from 1614, when statutes began to be recorded in the Kingdom of Hungary, until the late 17th century, when state intervention increasingly influenced municipal governance. These statutes are preserved in an edition of sources by Sándor Kolosvári and Kelemen Óvári (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890). In addition, Slovak and Hungarian historiography has provided valuable resources for this research. Works such as Drahošlav Magdoško's monograph on Košice's medieval self-government (Magdoško 2017) and Béla Wick's synthesis of Košice's history (Wick 1941) have been fundamental to the understanding of local government. Ján Kúkel's classification of statutes (Kúkel 2005) and Zuzana Nemcová's comparison of the statutes of Bratislava and Trnava (Nemcová 2014) have also contributed to this study.

Research Foundations

The study of medieval municipal self-government represents a fascinating field of historical and legal research, offering a deeper understanding of the social and political structures of the Middle Ages and early modern period. This broad topic encompasses various aspects, including the legal autonomy of the cities, the organization of municipal institutions, and the relationships between local residents and central authorities. Historians address questions such as how city statutes were formed and evolved, what was their impact on daily life, and what were the relationships like between urban elites and city residents. They also examine how the self-government of medieval cities varied across regions and developed under the influence of historical events.

The professional study of Košice's history began in the 19th century, initially focusing on the context of Abaúj-Torna County (Sziklay – Borovszky 1896) or on organizing archival materials. In the early 20th century, Hungarian historian Gyula Osváth focused on municipal privileges, city status, and leading roles of municipal governments from a legal-historical perspective. (Osváth 1918) In the 1940s, Béla Wick's extensive monograph on Košice's history partially addressed municipal self-government. In the second half of the 20th century, Ondrej Halaga explored municipal books and fundamental subjects of self-government in Košice. (Halaga 1956). Additional contributions to this field include studies of Richard Marsina on city privileges and Milena Ostrolúcka on Košice's economic administration in the 16th and 17th centuries (Ostrolúcka 1993). The judicial practices of the city in the late medieval and early modern period were analyzed by Blanka Szeghyová and Richard Papáč (Papáč 2019). Drahošlav Magdoško's detailed monograph provides an in-depth examination of Košice's medieval self-government (Magdoško 2017). These works offer a foundational context for this study.

Municipal Self-Government in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period

Terminology

In the study of municipal self-government, terminology plays a key role because precise and clear definitions of terms are essential for understanding and interpreting the studied phenomena. In researching medieval and early modern documents, one often encounters the problem that different concepts are referred to by different terms. This problem also appears in academic literature, where various authors use different terminology to describe the phenomena being studied.

The most important terms in researching the self-government of medieval and early-modern cities of the Kingdom of Hungary are the names of the functions of individual city officials and employees. At the head of the municipalities of medieval and early medieval towns was the mayor, who in the beginning of the Middle Ages was called *villicus* (lat. villa - settlement) In later periods, this position was named after its primary judicial function, *iudex* (lat. judge) (Magdoško 2017, 75). This is

where the German term *Richter* (ger. judge) comes from, which was also adopted into Slovak (*richtár*). In Košice's early modern statutes, the Hungarian term *bíró* is used, which is a direct translation of the Slovak word for judge.

The board of jurors was referred to by the Latin term *iurati* (from *iurare* - to swear) or *consules*, sometimes *cives consules*, with the most significant members being referred to as *gróf* (slov., hun. count) (Wick 1941, 232). In the academic literature, this body is called either the board of jurors or the inner council, while in Košice's city statutes, the Hungarian term *tanács* (board) is used. An older term for the elected community was the collective designation *elders* (lat. *seniores*). In the 15th century, as the structure of the body itself evolved, its designation changed to *community* (lat. *communitas*). From this term, the designation *elected community* (lat. *electa communitas*) emerged in the following period (Magdoško 2017, 110-111). In Slovak scholarly literature, this body is referred to as the *elected community*, *outer council*, or *broader council*. In the Košice legal articles, the outer council was designated by the Hungarian phrase *nemes község* (slov. *vznešená obec*, meaning noble community). At the head of the outer council stood a *speaker* or *spokesman*, who in the early Middle Ages was called *tribune of the people* (lat. *tribunus plebis*). Over time, this designation changed to *spokesman* (ger. *furmund*). From the German word *furmund*, the Hungarian term used in the Košice city statutes—*fírminder*, *fűrmender*—was derived.

Self-Government of Hungarian Free Royal Towns

The free royal towns of the Kingdom of Hungary represented a distinct type of urban community with their own rights and privileges. They fell under the jurisdiction of the king, meaning they were not subordinate to noble authorities. These towns enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy, particularly in the area of self-government. Until the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, unlike in other European countries, they maintained full control over their internal administration. Since monarchs did not appoint their own representatives to these towns, the elected municipal bodies did not have to fight for their authority and could fully focus on economic and political matters (Čičaj 2006, 29). The period of full autonomy for Hungary's free royal towns was interrupted at the end of the 17th century when the Habsburg monarchs attempted to curtail the powers of municipal authorities. A major shift occurred after the defeat of Imre Thököly's uprising, when commissioners from the Hungarian Chamber were delegated to the towns. These commissioners intervened in municipal elections and oversaw economic administration (Nemcová 2014, 144).

The key figures of self-government in free royal towns were the mayor and the town council, who handled the judicial and economic-political affairs of the town. Besides their judicial and administrative roles, they also had a representative function. Based on the appointment of the mayor, towns of the Kingdom of Hungary can be categorized into two types. Cities such as Košice, Bratislava, and Trnava had the right to elect their mayors. The second category consisted of towns with hereditary mayorship, where the officeholder had the freedom to transfer his position to another person or pass it on to his descendants. Examples of towns with a hereditary mayorship include Bardejov and Žilina (Chlepkó 2022, 24-25).

The foundation of municipal self-government in the Middle Ages and early modern period was the *town community*, meaning the collective body of all townspeople, who were joint holders of the town's privileges. In the early Middle Ages, they participated in the election of the mayor and town council and played a key role in filling other municipal offices. However, as urban populations grew, the election process became increasingly complex and unable to respond dynamically to emerging issues requiring swift resolution. To address this problem, an organ known as the *broader* or *outer council* was established to represent the interests of the entire community. This was a smaller group of townspeople who directly participated in the election of the mayor and town council. In addition to this function, the outer council also served as a supervisory and advisory body in public matters. They were involved in overseeing municipal finances, decision-making regarding city employees, and even judicial matters. Members of the outer council were appointed by the mayor in cooperation with the town council, making the distribution of power a matter controlled by a relatively closed circle of citizens (Magdoško 2017, 67). The number of outer council members varied across different cities and periods.

Self-Government of Košice

At the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, Košice was one of the most important free royal towns in the Kingdom of Hungary, the center of Upper Hungary, and a key commercial centre. The city's extensive archives allow the study of various social and economic phenomena, helping to understand nearly every aspect of life in the city. By the late 15th century, Košice had established an electoral system in which the election of the mayor and the town council was decided by approximately 50 to 60 members of the outer council. This change was driven both by the inefficiency of elections conducted by the broader town community and by the adoption of the electoral model from Buda. The transfer of competencies from the general citizenry to the outer council in Košice dates back to the 15th century. However, the increased share of power of this body occurred only in the 1570s, when records of provisions from the outer council to the town council, known as *articuli*, began to be adopted. (Magdoško 2017, 121) The appointment of outer council members was also adopted from Buda, where they were named by the mayor and town council before stepping down from office. (Kubinyi 1975, 84)

The number of members in the outer council was not fixed, but most sources indicate between 60 and 100 members. The outer council was also referred to as the *white council*, in contrast to the *black council*, which consisted of citizens who were not members of the outer council. The council functioned as an advisory and representative body, providing counsel to the town council and mayor while representing all full-fledged citizens. The town council was required to consider the proposals of the outer council, listen to its opinions on all important matters, and keep it informed about the resolution of various cases. The outer council met regularly at six tables, each seating ten members. The first table, known as the *table of elders*, was occupied by the most esteemed members of the council (Wick 1941,

233). The head of the outer council was the *speaker*, who led council meetings and represented the council before the mayor and the jurors. This role was first documented in the 16th century, appearing alongside the name of an outer council member. The importance of the speaker's position escalated towards the end of the Middle Ages and into the early modern period (Magdoško 2017, 121, 124).

The head of the city was the mayor, who was elected for a one-year term. Elections were typically held at the beginning of the calendar year, although the exact date was not fixed. From the 17th century, records indicate that elections were held at the town hall. The election of jurors took place on the same day as the election of the mayor. This system was also common in other Hungarian cities such as Buda, Prešov, and Bardejov (Uličný 1984, 121). During the early modern period, the inner council had 12 members who, along with the mayor, held judicial authority. In addition, they played a role in regulating economic and social matters within the city and its surrounding area and also served as a public notary. The days of town council meetings and the topics for discussion had been established since the 15th century, and these regulations remained largely unchanged in later periods (Flóra – Németh 2012, 20). The council met several times a week, depending on the number of issues requiring attention, typically starting early in the morning at 4 or 5 AM. On Saturdays, administrative matters concerning the city were discussed in sessions known as *dies petitoria*, whereas other sessions, known as *dies judiciales*, were dedicated to issuing verdicts on offenders, who were usually judged based on witness testimonies (Sziklay – Borovszky 1896). The mayor and the town council performed their duties *pro bono* until the late 17th century (Osváth 1918, 62-63). Their incomes primarily came from business ventures or practicing crafts, and their compensation for municipal service was minimal. The mayor's earnings also included various gifts from guilds, which were presented to him upon his election (Wick 1941, 236).

Self-Government of Trnava

The city of Trnava was granted its privileges in 1238 and had since maintained a strong autonomous status. Trnava's self-government was very similar to that of Košice. Its foundation was the so-called *burgher community*, which was equivalent to the burgher commune of Košice. It consisted of a relatively small group of full-fledged citizens who occupied key positions in the city's administration. References to the outer council date back to the early 15th century, where it is mentioned under the name *twenty-four* (slov. *dvadsaťštvorka*), indicating the number of its members. The inner council consisted of 12 burghers who convened occasionally to address issues that required resolution. Their responsibilities encompassed a wide range of matters, from economic affairs and parish concerns to the management of the city chancery. A unique position within the city's self-government was that of the so-called *Jewish mayor*, who, despite the title, was not a member of the Jewish community (Rábik 2013, 51–52).

Self-Government of Bratislava

The study of Bratislava's self-government benefits from a rich collection of historical sources. Similar to Košice and Trnava, Bratislava's city administration was led by a mayor and a 12-member town council, whose members were elected annually on St. George's Day (April 24). Membership in the town council was lifelong, and mayors typically held office for multiple consecutive terms (Segeš 2005, 38). References to a broader or outer council date back to the 14th century, when it had 24 members. During the 15th century, this body expanded to 60 members. A distinct official within Bratislava's city self-government was the *alderman* (*mešťanosta*), who oversaw the city's economic and administrative affairs. He was also responsible for maintaining land ownership records (Štefánik – Lukačka 2010).

Statutes

Municipal statutes are historical sources of official nature that enable a detailed examination of the functioning of municipal self-government, the dynamics of relationships, and the methods of resolving conflicts among its representatives in a given period. These legal norms, adopted to govern internal affairs, were subordinate to higher legal norms such as laws and customary law, which they were neither allowed to contradict nor circumvent. The Hungarian legal system stipulated that statutes could not interfere with private legal matters, though this provision was not always respected.

In Hungary, three types of statutes were adopted: municipal statutes, county statutes, and statutes of interest-based corporations (Laclaviková – Švecová 2007, 222). Municipal statutes hold significant historical value as they address specific issues faced by the city's inhabitants at the time and provide insight into the process of resolution by the city leadership. Additionally, they reflect the influence of external factors, thus serving as a window into the studied period. Statutes most commonly dealt with the powers and responsibilities of municipal employees, economic and judicial matters, taxation, social welfare, and often served as guidelines for handling fires, natural disasters, or epidemics.

The right to adopt statutes (*ius statutendi*) was an inseparable part of municipal privileges granted by the king, though their form, content, and circumstances of adoption varied from city to city (Luby 2002, 79). A shift in the statutory policies of Hungarian towns occurred during the 17th and 18th centuries when statutes began to be issued by royal commissioners appointed by the monarch. This new practice was linked to the Habsburgs' efforts of centralization, which aimed to disrupt the autonomy of Hungarian municipal self-governments (Laclaviková – Švecová 2007, 223).

Ján Kúkel, in his work *Štatúty schvaľované volenou obcou mesta Bratislavy*, distinguished between statutes in the true sense of the word and ordinances. According to Kúkel, statutes were characterized by a more extensive form and long-term validity, lasting until modified or updated. True statutes were also not issued at regular intervals. By this classification, ordinances were shorter texts with an operational nature, meaning they aimed to respond as promptly as possible to emerging

problems in city administration. They were issued more frequently than statutes and had only temporary validity (Kúkel 2005, 188–197). The nature of provisions can also be determined from the introductory captions of the texts, where various terms were used to designate the given source, such as *articuli*, *statuta*, *decreta*.

Bratislava Municipal Statutes

The first statutes in Bratislava were issued jointly by the city council and the outer council in the 14th century and concerned the Jewish population. The language of statutes and ordinances in Bratislava was German, and they were published in the statute edition *Corpus statutorum (Statuta et articuli municiporum)*. In the following periods, articles were issued containing various regulations for craftsmen and municipal employees, regulating prices, and addressing the functioning of municipal administration (Kúkel 2005).

In the 15th century, more extensive statutes were issued to regulate various areas of self-government, from judiciary matters to criteria for membership in the city's highest governing bodies (Nemcová 2014, 146–147). The year 1526 did not bring any changes to the city's statutory policy, as no new regulations were adopted until 1545. In the 16th century, ordinances were issued to regulate the prices of goods in the city, along with a new fire safety ordinance (Kúkel 2005). Most of the statutory sources from Bratislava can be classified as ordinances, as they were brief records adopted at irregular intervals to address urgent issues. The largest number of records concerned the butchers' guild, mainly focusing on the regulation of meat prices. This tendency may have been influenced by the power and wealth of Bratislava's butchers, who belonged to the wealthiest class of city residents (Segeš 2005, 49).

Trnava Municipal Statutes

The statutory policy of Trnava was examined by Zuzana Nemcová, who studied the city statutes from the period 1557 to 1577. These texts were written in Latin and were published by the city council along with the outer council, in which all three nationalities living in Trnava were represented. These records are much more extensive than those of Bratislava and deal with various aspects of city life. During this period, regulations were regularly adopted to respond to emerging situations in the city, such as the regulation of prices and systems of weights and measures, or provisions related to various guilds. The phrase "*decretum est*" or "*facta sunt decreta*" is most often found at the beginning of these regulations. According to Kúkel's classification, they could be categorized as ordinances. However, there are also statutes in the true sense of the word in the Trnava statutory records, which were adopted at irregular intervals and had longer validity. These provisions contained the caption "*statuta*," which explicitly reveals the nature of the record. Most of the statutes in the true sense of the word in Trnava dealt with setting the criteria for holding office for members of the city council and their competencies (Nemcová 2014, 149–150).

Košice City Statutes

The first references to sources of statutory nature in Košice are preserved from the 16th century. They were adopted by the outer council immediately after its election, at the beginning of the calendar year, and were addressed to the mayor and the city council (Magdoško 2017, 121). This is confirmed by the introductory captions of the statutes, written in Latin.¹ The language of the provisions is Hungarian, and all of them are labeled with the title “*articuli*.” They address various areas of city life, from price regulations and guild matters to determining the competencies of municipal employees. The articles were adopted at regular intervals, are very brief, and have an operational character. They respond to emerging problems and propose solutions in the short term. According to Ján Kúkel’s classification, they can be categorized as ordinances. This hypothesis is confirmed by the formulation of the articles, which are framed as requests from the outer council to the city council.

The city statutes of Košice can be categorized based on their content. Since classifying all the adopted articles would exceed the scope of this study, we have decided to highlight only those topics that appear most frequently among the adopted regulations or that are unique in some way. The content analysis was conducted using statutes from the period between 1616 and 1687 as examples. The year 1616 serves as the starting point since this was when the recording of articles began in the aforementioned book, which we discussed in the previous section. Although the book’s records extend until 1731, we have only processed them content-wise up to 1687, considering the changes that occurred in the status of urban self-governments in the country during the last third of the 17th century. Between 1616 and 1687, the external council of Košice adopted 660 regulations. The frequency of adopting these regulations varied from year to year, with some years having no preserved articles at all (for example, between 1647–1649, 1651–1652, 1655–1656, 1669–1676, and 1678–1682). During the examined period, the fewest regulations were adopted in 1660 (a total of 3), while the most were adopted in 1687 (a total of 26).

1 „Anno Domini MDCXVI. Generoso Domino Melchiori Rainer tertio reelectio iudici, caeterisque amplissimis dominis juratis senatoribus, ad exequendum praescripti et exhibiti.“

Figure 1. Frequency of adopted statutes between 1616 and 1687

Year	1616	1617	1618	1619	1620	1621	1622	1623	1624
Statutes	7	9	9	14	9	17	12	20	12
Year	1625	1626	1627	1628	1629	1630	1631	1632	1633
Statutes	14	13	15	20	17	20	12	21	15
Year	1634	1635	1636	1637	1638	1639	1640	1641	1642
Statutes	16	15	18	22	19	17	19	23	17
Year	1643	1644	1645	1646	1647	1648	1649	1650	1651
Statutes	14	13	13	10	-	-	-	12	-
Year	1652	1653	1654	1655	1656	1657	1658	1659	1660
Statutes	-	10	7	-	-	14	9	8	3
Year	1661	1662	1663	1664	1665	1666	1667	1668	1669
Statutes	7	-	9	12	7	10	9	5	-
Year	1670	1671	1672	1673	1674	1675	1676	1677	1678
Statutes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	-
Year	1679	1680	1681	1682	1683	1684	1685	1686	1687
Statutes	-	-	-	11	7	-	10	10	26

Provisions Regarding Municipal Employees

As mentioned in previous sections, one of the key competencies of the Košice municipal government was oversight of municipal employees. This is also reflected in the adopted provisions, as most of the statutes adopted – 12.57% in total – fall into this category. Categorizing statutes concerning municipal employees is complex, as the content analysis reveals that individual ordinances can be assigned to several categories.² Most often, the statutes dealt with the salaries and competencies of municipal employees, but every year articles concerning the neglect of duties or various frauds and violations of rules were also adopted. An example of an ordinance dealing with rule violations by municipal employees is article no. 10 from 1677, which addresses wine and beer officials who added water to wine and beer for their own benefit, (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 258) or article no. 4 from 1617, which lists the excesses of the city guards (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 156). It was also common practice for the external council to adopt provisions urging the city council to fill vacant positions. They most often needed to appoint priests, a city doctor, a cantor, and teachers.

² E.g. the cantor was a municipal employee, but the statutes concerning his service can also be assigned to statutes dealing with the ecclesiastical agenda.

Renovations, Constructions, and Hygiene Measures

From the thematic perspective, the second-largest category consists of articles dealing with various constructions, renovations, and hygiene measures implemented in the city. These accounted for 12.57% of the total 660 adopted statutes. I have classified hygiene measures within this category because, like construction and renovation regulations, they aimed at shaping the city's appearance and improving the quality of life for its residents.

Although people were already aware of hygiene issues in the Middle Ages, especially in larger cities, they did not devote sufficient attention to them. Certain professions or institutions, such as butcheries or hospitals, were often placed outside the city walls or in the suburbs for hygiene reasons. However, waste and sewage remained persistent problems, particularly in the most densely populated city centers (Ferenczi 2018, 142). The external council of Košice also addressed these concerns in its regulations. For instance, the 9th article from the year 1620 warned residents about the risks of infections caused by poor hygiene conditions (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 163). Similarly, the 14th article from 1634 urged the city council to impose strict penalties on those who polluted the city's streets. This regulation reveals that designated locations for storing manure were the city's bastions (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 197). The outer council also took measures to maintain the cleanliness of the Myslava stream, as evidenced by the 21st article from 1632, which called on the judge to punish those who contaminated the water in any way (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 193).

A significant number of regulations focused on construction and renovation projects. The primary emphasis was placed on maintaining the city's fortifications, roads, cemetery, church, and mills. As these structures were city property, their upkeep fell under the jurisdiction of the judge and city council. Special attention was given to what is now St. Elizabeth's Cathedral, referred to in the statutes as either the cathedral (*kathedrális*) or the great church (*nagy templom*). The greatest number of references to the need for renovation work can be found around the late 1630s and early 1640s, mainly concerning the church tower.

Some of the adopted regulations dealt with repairing damages caused by fires or natural disasters. One such statute is the 19th article from 1628, which addressed the necessity of damage control following floods (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 180). In the following years, efforts were actively made to resolve this issue, including measures for regulating the Myslava and Rak streams. Among the statutes, there were also regulations that encouraged new constructions or modifications to existing buildings. One such regulation is the 5th article from 1646, which urged city council members to build an additional floor on the prison building. This proposal was justified by the need to separate minor offenders from those who had committed serious crimes after the expansion was completed (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 222-223).

Provisions Regarding Guilds

Guilds were an integral part of early modern urban society. They brought together groups of craftsmen with the aim of limiting competition and ensuring product quality. Only those who demonstrated expertise in a given field could join, and they admitted only as many members as were needed for their community. Regulations concerning guilds formed one of the largest categories of Košice city statutes. They most frequently dealt with millers and coopers, with whom there were constant problems during the studied period. Complaints about them are evidenced by articles no. 1 and 5 from 1655, which specifically list the causes of dissatisfaction with craftsmen, including arbitrary price increases, poor work, or failure to deliver prepaid goods (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 228–229). One specific ordinance even reveals that the millers cheated not only the general population but also the church by taking flour from the church tithe (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 244). Statutes from 1618, 1624, and 1667 show that due to dissatisfaction with the coopers, the external council not only imposed fines on the guild but also recommended inviting coopers from other cities, especially during the grape harvest. (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 159, 171, 248). Since Košice was among the cities involved in both local and long-distance trade in wine, securing enough barrels and the smooth course of the harvest was crucial for them (Újváry 1979, 583). These provisions indicate the seriousness of the situation, as medieval cities were not open to foreigners, and moreover, municipal privileges secured the management of trade and crafts by city residents. The time gap between the adopted articles proves that the problem with the coopers was long-term, and the adopted ordinances did not bring the expected results. My research did not lead me to a conclusion as to whether the problem persisted because the city council did not respect the recommendations of the outer council and did not sufficiently sanction the coopers, or if sanctions were imposed but without sufficient effect. The ordinances show that, in addition to millers and coopers, there were also problems with builders and potters, but only in isolated cases.

Provisions Regarding Church Matters

In the medieval and early modern period, the church played a key role in the religious life of the population. Apart from its religious function, it also influenced various other spheres of urban life, such as education and social care. Conflicts arising from confessional differences often prevailed in the city, which were also captured in the city statutes. Article no. 8 from 1633, which forbids the use of lanterns in the shape of a star, is directed against Catholics, as it refers to them as people still in “*papal darkness*” (“*pápai sötétségben vadnak*”) (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 192). Alongside confessional differences, national diversity in the city was also reflected in the ordinances. This is confirmed by provisions that set the requirement for the representation of different nationalities in church affairs or ensuring spiritual life in the languages of the most numerous nationalities in the city (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 195). Provisions prohibiting or restricting folk traditions and celebrations of pagan origin also belonged to the Košice statutory creations. The church set moral norms in early modern society, as it is seen in the regulation from

1661, which recommended the introduction of sanctions for sinning. The text of the provision resembles biblical texts, as it references God's punishments for sins (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 238-239). Honoring the church was also mandated by article no. 12 from 1632, which addressed the problem of noise coming from inns during sermons (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 186). The external council also sought to control church representatives. There are articles that encourage the reprimanding of priests for insufficient fulfillment of their duties, either in general (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 206) or in specific matters, such as missing sermons or neglecting spital visits (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 225).

Statutes Responding to External Stimuli

Just like the Bratislava and Trnava city statutes, the Košice statutes did not directly respond to nationwide events, but they reflected them in the justifications of individual provisions. An example of such a reflection is article no. 2 from 1664, which established the gathering of a sufficient amount of grain reserves, adopted during the wars against the Turks. Although the exact cause for adoption is not stated, the statute mentions a certain danger *“at the gates of the city”* (*“... mert kitül Isten oltalmazza ha valami veszedelem, az ki csak nem ajtónk előtt vagyon, találna bennünket”*) (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 242-243). A statute reflecting contemporary events in the country was also article no. 2 from 1686, which was adopted after the defeat of Imre Thököly's uprising, revealing that due to the rapid decline in population, it was necessary to address the problem of abandoned properties and the appropriation of the property of the deceased (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890, 267). In this case, the specific cause of the situation is not mentioned. However, we know that the anti-Habsburg estates' uprisings led to a significant decline in the city. The financial burden was caused by maintaining the army, whose members ravaged and exploited the population. There were also violent confiscations by soldiers, who often forced peasants to sign declarations that they had voluntarily handed over contingents and had not been coerced (Halaga 1967, 82). The opposing sides fought for control over the most important eastern stronghold, which meant constant devastation and depopulation for the city. The fights also paralyzed trade. Blockades and looting by soldiers prevented the export of goods, as the frontlines severed important market connections.

However, there are a few known cases where the city statutes responded to national laws. An example of such a response is article no. 6 from 1641, in which the external council expressed dissatisfaction with laws prohibiting the export of wine from the country (Kolosvári – Óvári 1890: 188). This reaction is not surprising, considering that most of Košice's citizens were involved in viniculture. They invested their capital in vineyards and sold most of the wine they produced because the wine trade offered a quick means of enrichment. The people of Košice were involved in both local and long-distance trade (Újváry 1979, 583).

Figure 2. Thematic division of the statutes adopted between 1616 and 1687

Theme	Number	Percentage
City employees	83	12.57%
Renovations, hygiene measures	71	10.75%
Guild members	37	5.60%
Ecclesiastical affairs	34	5.15%
Municipal bodies	33	5%
Economic activities	28	4.24%
Education	25	3.78%
Finances	25	3.78%
Villages, suburbs	19	2.87%

Let me know if you need any modifications! 😊

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Conclusion

In this article we have focused on the municipal governments of Hungarian cities and their city statutes. This topic has been addressed by several authors, particularly in Hungarian and Slovak historiography. The available literature is very diverse in terms of content focus and the level of detail of the published works. The starting point for this topic was the research of the municipal governments of Hungarian cities. We have concluded that most municipal governments in the Kingdom of Hungary had almost the same structure of personnel in the city's leadership, with only slight differences. The main components of the municipal governments of medieval and early modern cities included the mayor and a 12-member council of jurors who had judicial, administrative, and representative functions. They were elected annually by the external council, which developed from the institution of the urban community. The external council was a supervisory and advisory body and had the right to adopt statutes.

Statutes are legal norms adopted to manage internal affairs, which function as examples of urban self-regulation. They are one of the most informative sources of official character, through which the internal mechanisms of city administration can be observed. They also provide insight into the history of daily life, offering solutions to the problems the urban society of the time had to face. When researching statutes, one of the key points is the question of their legal force. In this research, we have concluded that the Košice city statutes were more of recommendations from the outer council to the city council. This is evident for several reasons. One of them is the stylistics and formulation of the provisions. While analyzing the text, it becomes clear that the articles were formulated as recommendations or requests. Their introductory captions are also significant, as they are labeled with the word “*articuli*” rather than “*statuta*.” Another piece of evidence supporting this conclusion is that in many cases, the provisions are repeated annually. Our assumption

is that if the statutes had the legal force of binding norms, they would not have needed to be repeated yearly. While determining the legal force of the statutes, we relied on Ján Kúkel's classification, who divided statutes into two categories. The first category consisted of ordinances, which were brief articles with short-term validity and an operational character. On the other hand, statutes in the true sense of the word were characterized as more extensive texts with long-term validity, adopted at irregular intervals. According to this classification, the statutes from the period 1614 to the end of the century fall into the category of ordinances. While comparing the city statutes from Bratislava, Košice, and Trnava, we concluded that most of the adopted provisions in each city belong to the category of ordinances and cannot be classified as statutes in the true sense of the word. They respond to problems that have just arisen in the city and seek the fastest solutions.

The statutes of Košice from the 17th century represent a unique historical source, offering a glimpse into the everyday life, challenges, and self-governance of one of the most important cities in the Kingdom of Hungary. They reflect the city's multi-cultural and multi-ethnic character, its economic dynamism, and the legal and administrative traditions that shaped its development. The examination of these statutes provides an opportunity to understand not only the history of Košice but also the broader processes of urbanization, social stratification, and political change in Central Europe. This research contributes to the understanding of the legal culture of the region, highlighting the ways in which cities navigated the tensions between their own interests and the demands of the central authorities. Through a detailed analysis of the statutes and related archival materials, it is possible to reconstruct the practical functioning of municipal governance and the daily realities of life in Košice during the early modern period. This provides a valuable resource for historians and enriches our knowledge of the urban history of the Kingdom of Hungary.

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