CHAPTER FOUR

REGENSBURG AND THE UNIVERSITIES

In scientiis pro ficiere et virtutibus decorari

When boys completed their grammar training, usually between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, those who had shown sufficient skill and possessed the requisite means could continue their education at the university level. Advanced education offered a variety of advantages, not least of which was the prestige that it brought to the individual and his family. However, the absence of German universities that persisted well into the fourteenth century forced German students to travel great distances at significant personal expense. The extent of this financial burden generally precluded all but the economically and politically privileged from university study. Beginning with Prague in the 1340s and especially Vienna in the 1370s, the economic threshold of university study fell. As a result, the number of German university students expanded nearly unabated for a century. The rate of expansion was particularly impressive between 1385 and 1470 when university matriculants at German universities increased nearly nine-fold.

Even though Regensburg entered into economic stagnation and decline in the late fourteenth century, its students participated in this general expansion in a manner roughly equal to that of other large cities in southern Germany. The long-established grammar schools within

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2 As Rainer Schwinges has noted this expansion runs counter to the overall demographics of the period which saw a precipitous decline in general population following the Black Death. German population does not begin to recover until the late fifteenth century and does not return to pre-plague levels until after the end of Middle Ages. Schwinges, “On Recruitment in German Universities from the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries,” in Universities and Schooling in Medieval Society, eds. William J. Courtenay and Jürgen Miethke (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 34.

the city provided a steady and even growing supply of students to the newly founded universities. In addition, the wealthy collegiate churches of the city and the cathedral chapter attracted significant numbers of highly educated men and provided benefices that supported well-connected individuals during their years of study. The mendicant orders in Regensburg too, especially the Dominicans and Augustinian Hermits, sent many of their members to universities throughout Europe.

As the number of students from the schools of Regensburg to the universities increased, so did the stream of university-trained men into the city and its institutions. Beginning in the early fifteenth century, the city itself began to recruit university-trained men to serve its bureaucratic and legal needs. In some cases, the council provided direct financial aid to specific students. At the same time, the sons of Regensburg’s political elites began to attend universities in significant numbers, especially Leipzig, Vienna, and Ingolstadt.

By examining the flow of students from the city of Regensburg into the universities, and from the universities back into the city, it is possible to gain a clearer understanding of the interface between city and university during the late Middle Ages. In this, historians of late medieval German education are better situated than those of other regions. The large number of matriculation records that survive from the period, when combined with other biographical information, provides extraordinary opportunities for exploring the growing importance of, and increasing access to, education during the fourteenth and fifteenth century.\footnote{The literature on the universities is vast and growing. For a good recent bibliography and discussion of the reorientation of university history over the last several decades, see William J. Courtenay, and Jürgen Miethke eds, \textit{Universities and Schooling in Medieval Society} (Leiden: 2000), 1–4. For Germany, see particularly, Peter Moraw, \textit{Zur Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Universität im späten Mittelalter,” Gassner Universitätsblätter} 8 no. 2 (1975), 44–60; Peter Classen, \textit{Studium und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter, MGH Schriften}, vol. 29, ed. Johannes Fried (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1983), 1–26; Rainer C. Schwinges, \textit{Deutsche Universitätsbesucher; Gelehrte im Reich, zur Sozial- und Wirkungsgeschichte akademischer Eliten des 14. bis 16. Jahrhunderts}, ed. R. C. Schwinges (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1996); Klaus Wriedt, \textit{University Scholars in German Cities During the Late Middle Ages: Employment, Recruitment, and Support}, in \textit{Universities and Schooling in Medieval Society}, eds. William J. Courtenay and Jürgen Miethke (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 49–64. Two local case studies are also worthy of note: Urs Martin Zahnd, \textit{Die Bildungsverhältnisse in den bernischen Ratgeschlechtern im ausgehenden Mittelalter. Verbreitung, Charakter und Funktion der Bildung in der Politischen Führungsschicht einer spätmittelalterlichen Stadt}, Schriften der Berner Burgerbibliothek (Bern: Berner Burgerbibliothek 1979); Martin Kintzinger, \textit{Das Bildungswesen in der Stadt Braunschweig im hohen und späten Mittelalter: Verfassungs- und institutionengeschichtliche Studien zu Schulpolitik und Bildungsförderung}, Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, vol. 32 (Köln: Böhlau, 1990).}