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A HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY IN EUROPE

GENERAL EDITOR
WALTER RÜEGG

This is the second volume of a four-part History of the University in Europe, written by an international team of authors under the general editorship of Professor Walter Rüegg. The series has been sponsored by the Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents and Vice-Chancellors of the European Universities (CRE) and is intended for the general reader as well as the specialist. It covers the development of the university in Europe (east and west) from its origins to the present day, focusing not on the history of individual institutions, nor on the universities in any individual country, but on a number of major themes viewed from a European perspective.

The originality of this work lies in its comparative, interdisciplinary, collaborative and transnational nature. It is not a history of ideas – even though each volume has a ‘Learning’ section dealing with the content of what was taught at universities at the time – but rather an appreciation of the role and structures of the universities seen against a backdrop of changing conditions, ideas and values.

Volume II, *Universities in Early Modern Europe*, attempts to situate the universities in their social and political context throughout the three centuries spanning the period 1500 to 1800.

A HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSITY IN EUROPE

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The university is the only European institution to have preserved its fundamental patterns and basic social role and functions over the course of the last millennium. This *History* shows how and why the university grew to encompass the whole of knowledge and most of the world, how it developed an intellectual tradition common to all Europeans, and how it trained academic and professional elites whose ethos transcends national boundaries.

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VOLUME II
UNIVERSITIES IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE
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EDITOR
HILDE DE RIDDER-SYMOENS



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READER'S GUIDE



This series, although compiled by specialists, is destined for the general reader. The notes and bibliographies accompanying the different chapters have therefore been kept to a minimum. The notes are either bibliographical references to specific sources, generally the most important or recent works relating to the subject, or they have been introduced to justify quantitative data or explain any significant difference between two interpretations of a particular point. A select bibliography follows each chapter. These bibliographies are designed to stimulate further reading and are not exhaustive. The reader will find more complete bibliographical references in the works indicated. As a number of well-known works for the period are quoted in several chapters, abbreviations of the titles of these works have been used in the notes. A list of bibliographical abbreviations is included. Furthermore, the reader will find a more general bibliography and some maps at the end of chapter 2 ('Patterns'), as this chapter locates the presence and nature of universities during the early modern period. In order to avoid too many overlaps between the various chapters, the editors have made cross-references to other chapters in the text as well as in the notes, thereby informing the reader that more ample information on the subject can be found elsewhere in the volume (see also the geographical and subject index). The standard English version of proper names has been used throughout; when necessary, a form more commonly used in continental Europe is indicated by means of a cross-reference in the name index.

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FOREWORD



WALTER RÜEGG
 (General Editor)

‘The history of universities was *terra incognita* until the early 1950s, inhabited only by pious hagiographers, myopic chroniclers and that most dangerous of pre-historic animals, the historians of education. This latter creature . . . only seems to be concerned with gathering historical justifications for contemporary educational nostrums, or identifying the earliest instance of a pedagogic practice that meets with modern approbation.’¹ This judgement taken from an essay on the history of English universities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, contains, despite certain exaggerations and insults, a kernel of truth, and it should serve as a warning for all those who concern themselves with the past of the *alma mater studiorum*. For, as another historian has written: ‘As a general rule, the history of a university has been written as a piece of “official” history by specially appointed historians. In such circumstances, the portrait normally appears without the warts.’²

The present *History of the University in Europe* was initiated by the Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents and Vice-Chancellors of the European Universities (CRE), which has some five hundred universities from eastern and western Europe as members. Nevertheless, it is anything but an ‘official’ history of European universities. As was stated in detail in the introduction to the first volume, the CRE, which met regularly for conferences to discuss the current problems and the future tasks of its members, decided at the beginning of the 1980s that it needed to

¹ V. Morgan, ‘Approaches to the History of the English Universities in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, in G. Klingenstein, H. Lutz and G. Stourzh (eds.), *Bildung, Politik und Gesellschaft. Studien zur Geschichte des europäischen Bildungswesens vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Wiener Beiträge zur Geschichte der Neuzeit, 5 (Vienna, 1978), 142.

² Kearney, *Scholars and Gentlemen*, 11.

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have a better knowledge of the history of universities. Since such a work was lacking, it proposed that there should be a meeting of historians and sociologists of universities who would reflect on the feasibility of such a project. In 1983, after it was decided that such a scheme could be carried out, it gave the responsibility for elaborating it and then carrying it out to an editorial board.

The plan for a work in four volumes, the selection of contributors, the coordination and editing of the contributions were and are entirely the responsibility of the editorial board. That board had as its only guiding principle the aim to produce a comparative and comprehensive analysis, taking into account the most recent research on the social setting and tasks, the distinctive intellectual and institutional features, the structures and the main problems of the European university from the Middle Ages to the present. It was to deal with the fundamental and enduring characteristics of the European universities, with what was common to them and with their national and regional variations. Financial support and physical accommodation for editorial meetings, scholarly assistance and translation have been provided by private philanthropic foundations and universities. The general secretariat of the Standing Conference of Rectors has been available to the editorial board for administrative purposes.

As the first volume on the medieval universities, which appeared in 1992, showed, many of the studies on medieval universities published before 1950, even if they were produced on the occasion of jubilees and in justification of present aspirations, have directly and indirectly added considerably to the illumination of the *terra incognita* of university history. This notwithstanding, we repeatedly encountered open questions and subjects which had been left untouched by research.

This has proved to be even more true for the period from 1500 to 1800. The only detailed work treating, on the basis of the sources, the development of higher education and universities, curricula and teaching, as well as the economic, political and intellectual setting, did not deal with the whole of Europe but only with the German-speaking areas; the author acknowledged in the foreword that 'it was interest in the future of our higher education which led me to occupy myself with the past'.³ In fact, the aim of Friedrich Paulsen, professor of philosophy and education at the University of Berlin, in the public discussion before the famous educational conference in Berlin in 1890, was to break the monopoly of the ancient languages of the *Gymnasia*; for this reason he tried to demonstrate their uselessness for a genuinely humanistic education. Nevertheless, he adhered to the old maxim, 'History can teach

³ Paulsen, *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts*, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1885; 3rd edn, Leipzig, 1919), xvi.

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only those who listen to it, not those who want to tell it something.' The product, which first appeared in two stout volumes in 1888, became the classic work on the history of the *Gymnasia* and universities in German-speaking countries in the period between 1500 and – in the third edition – 1914.⁴

As Jacques Verger observed as late as 1981, the universities of early modern times did not enjoy a good reputation. In speaking of them, words like 'sclerosis', 'decadence', 'coma', were used. One of the reasons for this was that the rich documentation which was available had been used only sparingly.⁵ In 1984, Heiko Oberman cited three causes for this situation: one was that, while the history of universities was a special field for medievalists, modern historians were more interested in other fields in which 'real' life could be studied, and they gave no more than a courteous nod to the universities. A second reason, according to Oberman, was that early research in the Renaissance confined itself to the conflict between humanism and scholasticism at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The third reason – the best historians of universities themselves alleged this – was that the universities of the centuries between 1500 and 1800 became less interesting, because they neglected their social function and fell into a state of crisis at a time when their respective societies needed them most.⁶

In the meantime, the study of early modern universities has changed markedly for the better, thereby reducing the persuasiveness of these assertions. During the last decades, there have been important investigations, especially on scientific and educational developments and on the social mobility and vocational orientation of students. These investigations have in many respects corrected the negative image of the decay of the universities. The contrast between humanism and scholasticism has, in recent research on the Renaissance, been made much less sharp, and it is really nowadays relevant only at a few points. The social role of the universities provides the main themes of our four volumes. The present volume shows that the functions of the universities did, in fact, change in adaptation to immediate social necessities and demands.

Perhaps it was this change in their social function from the search for truth to meeting social needs, which stood in the way of a comprehensive history of universities between 1500 and 1800. The survey of the

⁴ Paulsen, *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts*, vol. II, 3rd edn (Leipzig/Berlin, 1921).

⁵ J. Verger, 'Les universités à l'époque moderne', in G. Mialaret and J. Vial (eds.), *Histoire mondiale de l'éducation*, vol. II (Paris, 1981), 247–72; M.–M. Compère, 'Les universités: d'une cléricature à l'autre', in Chartier, *Éducation en France*, 249; J. Le Goff, 'La conception française de l'université à l'époque de la Renaissance', in *Universités européennes*, 96–8.

⁶ H. A. Oberman, 'University and Society on the Threshold of Modern Times: the German Connection', in J. M. Kittelson and P. J. Transue (eds.), *Rebirth, Reform and Resilience: Universities in Transition 1300–1700* (Columbus, Ohio, 1984), 21–5.

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literature which follows chapter 2 refers, under the heading of ‘General works’, to two short surveys by our collaborators Frijhoff and Verger, three collections of essays which deal with various aspects of the subject, and three books which deal with the European scene as a whole. The book of Stefan d’Irsay impressively summarized in 168 pages the state of knowledge up to 1933. The *Historical Compendium of European Universities*, which appeared in 1984 in close connection with our project, contains the most important historical dates and bibliography for individual universities. *Le università dell’Europa*, published in Italy in a luxurious edition with many illustrations, covers the period between 1500 and 1650 in its second volume. The texts, written by excellent scholars, present the history of the universities of the different European countries; its bibliographical references for each chapter are very scanty.

The most important historical works on the European universities, like those of Denifle, Kaufmann and Rashdall, begin and end – partly contrary to the authors’ own intentions – with the Middle Ages. To avoid such a danger, the editorial board began work on the present volume two years before it started the first volume. That it began to be ready for publication only a year after the publication of the first volume may be taken as evidence of the difficulties which arose in connection with certain chapters and which required repeated revision and even replacement of contributors.

Charles B. Schmitt, the great authority on the history of universities of the sixteenth century and the founder of the ground-breaking international yearbook entitled *History of Universities*, wrote in 1975:

Not only is much basic work left to be done on the documents themselves of even the most important and influential university centers, but we are sorely in need of synthetic and comparative studies relating several universities to one another. Nevertheless, even on the basis of materials which have already been published, we are in a position to begin some sort of synthesis.

Our own work can be no more than what Schmitt claimed for his essay: ‘In brief, what follows is to be considered merely a preliminary attempt at a general synthesis’.⁷

The present volume is parallel in its structure to the first volume – with two exceptions. In Part II (Structures) we present an account – as was indicated in the foreword to the first volume – of the transfer of European university models to other continents; in the sixteenth and

⁷ C. B. Schmitt, ‘Philosophy and Science in Sixteenth Century Universities: Some Preliminary Comments’, in J. E. Murdoch and E. D. Sylla (eds.), *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning* (Dordrecht, 1975), 485–537; quotations: 485 and 486.

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seventeenth centuries the transfer was to Central, South and North America. Although we had at first planned to publish two sub-chapters, we subsequently decided, in view of the European perspective of the work as a whole, to bring the two separate sub-chapters into a single comparative chapter. In Part IV ('Learning'), we did not follow the medieval division of faculties, partly because the development of science in our period cuts across boundaries of the old faculties, and partly because some parts of the development occurred quite outside the universities. This section is introduced by 'Tradition and Innovation', which is a historical analysis of the sciences as they developed in the Middle Ages and their renewal and growth within and outside the universities. A substantial presentation of the content of what was taught in the four faculties forms the conclusion of the section. Between those two parts, there is a chapter entitled 'Frameworks of Knowledge', which treats the various attempts made to conceptualize and systematize the rapidly expanding stock of knowledge, from theology as the dominant science of the Middle Ages and the period of the Reformation to jurisprudence, which became the dominant science of the seventeenth century, and then philosophy, which attained a similar position in the eighteenth century. The chapter on the growth of science examines the central theme of the history of science of this period – the Scientific Revolution. It shows that, to a greater extent than was formerly thought, there was a growth of science in the British universities and it deals with the influence of this growth on the universities.

The various chapters, as in the first volume, were revised by the editors in full sessions of their board and then by the individual authors. The final version, as in the case of the first volume, was revised by the volume editor, Hilde de Ridder-Symoens.

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