

320 YEARS FROM THE TEMPORARY RELOCATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TARTU TO PÄRNU (1699–1710)

The University of Tartu moved to Pärnu in August of 1699 and the opening festive assembly of the Academia Gustavo-Carolina in its new home was held on 28 August. This move did not take place by chance and one can read about the circumstances surrounding the move in the transcripts of the university senate as well as in a publication that was specially dedicated to the inauguration assembly in Pärnu.

Academic moving was a common phenomenon at that time. Scholars often travelled from one university to another and indeed, it was not uncommon for entire academies to move. This was primarily due to wars, but also to religious and political situations. Disputations and speeches were dedicated to academic migration in many universities and a separate genre developed, apademic literature, which concentrated on travelling, its dangers and benefits. When considering the moving of the University of Tartu to Pärnu, it stands out that this move was also treated using the concepts of this genre. Professor of rhetoric Michael Dau dedicated his academic farewell speech ‘On the Migration of Knowledge’ (*De migratione literarum*), which unfortunately (as far as is known) has not survived, to the moving of the university, and the disputation ‘The Prudent Traveller, Briefly Delineated’ (*Prudens peregrinator, breviter delineatus*) was also held in Pärnu within the framework of the opening academic festivities.

It clearly emerges from speeches dedicated to moving the academy that the idea of relocating the University of Tartu to Pärnu did not first arise at the end of the 17th century, rather it had already been discussed almost since the founding of the university. The fact that the Russian-Swedish War of 1656–1658 had a devastating effect on the university in Tartu also stands out in all of these texts. Professors and students fled to Tallinn after Tartu was captured by Russian forces in 1656 but the academy did not particularly succeed in continuing to function there and after a few years, the academy had ceased to operate altogether. The city of Tartu remained in very miserable condition after the war. The academy’s building had been laid waste, and the houses were in a state of disrepair. It was questionable whether there was any point at all in reopening the university in Tartu, and Pärnu’s candidacy was already under very serious discussion at that time. Ultimately, and largely for the reason that the university had been there before, the academy was finally reopened in Tartu in 1690. Even so, the question of whether or not it would still be a better idea to move the university to Pärnu already started being discussed shortly thereafter since Pärnu’s connection to Sweden was better and it was located farther from the Russian border. The latter argument in particular was of such importance that the university turned to the king and presented an explanation that thanks to its disadvantageous location, some people did not wish to even come to Tartu at all and for this reason, the university’s activity was withering.

This plan nevertheless did not reach the implementation stage and it was not until the reign of the next king, Charles XII, that this idea was put into action under the direction of the academy’s chancellor Erik Dahlberg. Yet the university could only operate in Pärnu until 1710 – the university’s situation in Pärnu was even worse than it had been in Tartu due to the Great Northern War that had in the meantime broken out. It is

nevertheless noteworthy that regardless of the war and economic hardship, the university still continued to operate, lecturers were paid their wages, disputations were defended at the university, speeches were held and students took their degrees.

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