

LEA LEPPIK: *Kalefaktoripojast professoriks. Tartu ülikooli teenistujate sotsiaalne mobiilsus 1802–1918* [Janitor's son into professor. The social mobility of employees of the University of Tartu, 1802–1918]. Kleio / Tartu Ülikooli ajaloo muuseum. Tartu 2011. 380 pp. ISBN 9789985930496.

This study of the non-professorial employees of the University of Dorpat from the university's re-founding under Emperor Alexander I to the end of the tsarist era is a significant contribution to the literature finding increasing social and economic vitality in tsarist-era Estonian lands of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The strengthening middle classes of Dorpat, increasingly Estonians as the century progressed, provided the bulk of these employees. Reciprocally, the expanding university provided new and more enhanced employment opportunities.

Based on the author's doctoral dissertation completed at the University of Tartu in 2006, this book places its subject in a very broad framework; the result is much more than a study of university employees but rather a social history of those connected with the university and even to some degree of the town Dorpat itself in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Lea Leppik emphasizes social change, particularly social mobility and the professionalisation of a wide range of employees, and she assays these trends as constituent aspects of social modernization (*ühiskonna moderniseerumine*). Throughout the volume she stresses that the human capital developed in this period at the University of Dorpat in the tsarist era provided a healthy inheritance for the inter-war Estonian Republic.

As the university expanded since its re-founding, employees who were not professors grew exponentially in number. Between 1802 and 1916 the number of full professors increased from 25 to 50, while the number of lecturers of various kinds increased from 7 to 92, technicians in clinics from 2 to 68, chancery staff from 6 to 34, and other lower ranks of employees (simply, *teenijad*) from 2 to 150. The key sources for Leppik's study are the personnel files and service records of university employees in non-teaching positions, held in the Estonian Historical Archives (*Eesti Ajalooarhiiv*) in Tartu.¹ The some 1,400 individuals represented by these files make up three fourths of the surviving files of all university personnel – about whom little would be known were it not for the existence of these files. (The remaining quarter of personnel files are those of university instructors, about whom additional sources of information are often available.)

Leppik begins with a comprehensive survey of the concept of estate (Ger. *Stand*, Est. *seisus*) in the Baltic region and of the various major estate categories – nobility, clergy, townspeople (upper-class “citizens” and lower-class non-citizens), the particular Baltic German group known as *Lit-eraten*, and peasants. Estate was important for those who worked at the University of Dorpat since instructors at the university were considered

¹ The material is collected in fond 402, *Tartu Keiserlik Ülikool*.

state employees. Leppik writes that the tsarist state wanted institutions of higher learning to contribute to social stabilization, which would have discouraged individuals from changing their estate status. But a number of factors worked against social stasis: geographic mobility was ever more salient as the century wore on, the population of Dorpat was expanding, and higher education and training – though often difficult to attain – was available as a path to higher status.

Chapter 2 sets the stage in presenting an overview of the history of Dorpat in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The town grew even faster than other significant cities and towns in the Baltic provinces – Riga and Reval, in particular. In the late eighteenth century the small burg of some 3,400 inhabitants became by the end of the nineteenth century a flourishing city of over 42,000. Like these other cities, Dorpat was diverse in terms of language and religious affiliation. In Dorpat, the number of those with the legal status of peasant was relatively high – 70% – and, correspondingly, the number of citizens (*kodanikud*, *Bürger*) was low, at 18%. Estonians dominated numerically, as nearly two thirds of the population spoke Estonian more frequently than any other (16% spoke German most often and 9% Russian).

The most important factor in Dorpat's development was, of course, the university. As the university grew after its re-establishment in 1802, so did Dorpat. The student body was increasingly diverse – even after Russian became the language of instruction in 1894 in most areas of study, and the university was open to individuals from the lower social classes. Thus, as the university expanded, the educated came primarily from groups not part of the traditional elites – people from the urban middle class and poorer working-class and peasantry.

University instructors – that is, those who were lecturers, not part of the university professoriate – are examined in Chapter 3. This group included instructors in languages, various arts and forms of physical education, as well as religion (Lutheran, Catholic and Orthodox). The ethnic and social background of these instructors was diverse; some came from outside the Russian Empire. Many of these instructors both taught university students and gave private lessons to the public. Leppik notes the presence early in the century of individuals fleeing conditions in revolutionary-era France who worked as instructors of French, fencing, dance and swimming. Throughout the century, instructors from German lands came to Dorpat to teach music, drawing and gymnastics; for more than half a century the skills of equestrianism was passed on to university students by a father and son from Denmark. Estonians and Latvians advanced into the ranks of university instructors notably in the areas such as language instruction (Estonian and Latvian) and drawing.

New technical fields were central aspects of the university's growth. Leppik writes: "society increasingly expected of higher education not only

problem-solving abilities typical of the Humboltian university ideal, but also practical proficiencies” (p. 128).² In Chapter 4 Leppik describes how medical and pharmacological studies grew in scope and complexity; the fields of physics, chemistry, botany, and zoology expanded, and with new laboratories came employees to direct and run them. Much of the new support staff early in the century came from abroad, but in time staff – and occasionally professors – were graduates of the university. Many who worked at the university went on to advance their careers with positions elsewhere in the Russian Empire. But the university also provided careers and even some degree of social mobility to those from lower social classes and who were the more poorly paid among university employees, such as laboratory assistants. Aleksander Reinvald, an Estonian who began working at the university in 1885, when he was twenty-four years of age, was the son of a turner and had himself originally prepared to become a shoemaker. He flourished in university employment and became famed for his superior dissection work in the human anatomical lab; eventually he obtained the title of “preparator.” His career at the university continued for 45 years to his death in 1930, by which time the university had been for over a decade the leading institution of higher learning in independent Estonia. Leppik comments:

“The formal [social; B.D.W.] status during one’s time of employment generally did not change; future social advancement was for one’s children. Laboratory employees played an important role in connecting the imperial university with the Estonian national university. Many laboratory assistants continued their work in the University of Tartu within the Republic of Estonia, carrying with them continuity of structure. Many succeeded in obtaining the position for which their true skills they were qualified – as in the case of preparator Reinvald” (p. 146).

Assistants in the various medical clinics at the university – the focus of Chapter 5 – grew in number by the early twentieth century to be the largest group within academic support personnel. Work as medical assistants was often part of preparatory studies prior to becoming a physician. Midwifery grew already in the early nineteenth century, and this brought positions for women, even before the position of nurse developed, which was not until the 1870s. The first teaching positions for women at the university were in the field of midwifery.

Trained tradesmen in university employment are discussed in Chapter 6, including printers, mechanical engineers and makers of precision instruments, and builders and architects, though the latter of course differed from the others in terms of status. Highly trained tradesmen early in the century were generally from German lands, though over time the local population made inroads into this group. Over the course of the century tradesmen were increasingly not full-time university employees, their

² All translations from the book given in this review are by the reviewer.

services instead acquired through separate contracts. Only mechanical engineers remained as university employees by the end of the period. Among those with valued technical skills, as in other professions associated with the university, upward mobility was noted, particularly between generations as sons of lower-skilled workers moved into positions of greater skill and thus social status.

The university's chancery and clerical staff is discussed in Chapter 7. Leppik writes of a "service revolution" that took place toward the end of the nineteenth century in the Baltic provinces. For centuries positions in local administrative bodies had been created for the educated *Literaten* – lawyers, notaries and secretaries. Increasingly, however, chancery and other higher-level work (what we might call "desk jobs") were in the hands of trained professional administrators, while lower-level tasks were completed by copyists and others working on contracts. During the Russification period at the university – the late 1880s to 1905 – when the university's self-governance was limited and Russian became the language of instruction, the number of chancery and clerical workers began to rise significantly and the composition of this sector of university employees became more diverse, to include not only Estonians and Russians, but also women. That chancery work was characterized by increasing professionalisation can be seen from the fact that employees often moved laterally between positions not only within the university, but also between positions at the university and in state and local administrative offices – for example, in city government, the police, and offices managing economic affairs.

Those responsible for the university's finances and for its physical plant are examined in Chapter 8. Leppik pays particular attention to the position of *kalefaktor* (Ger. *Kalfaktor*), a type of low-level employee that generally provided custodial, janitorial and other low-level services. By the 1840s Estonians commonly held this position. Some *kalefaktorid* had careers that brought financial security, and even modest wealth. *Kalefaktor* Thomas Brügger – Leppik does not indicate whether he was an Estonian or German – was able over his career, which lasted from 1814 to 1849, to assemble enough money to leave a house to his two daughters, and a substantial loan he had made to the university's revenue secretary continued to bring in money after his death. As a result, both daughters were left sufficient wealth to provide for their educations and living expenses.

Security and the maintenance of order at the university were entrusted to beadles (*pedellid*), the subject of Chapter 9. There were no beadles at universities in Russia, but the position had been a feature of the Swedish-era Academia Gustaviana in Dorpat in the seventeenth century when Livland was under Swedish rule, and the position was restored with the reopening of the university in the early nineteenth century. Even when new university inspectors were appointed to the university according to

empire-wide laws in 1895, the university's beadles kept their positions, continued in them until 1918.

Beadles were also able with hard work to move upward in status; social mobility was particularly evident between generations. The earliest beadles in the nineteenth century were all Germans, but by the 1840s, nearly all were Estonians. Senior beadle Wilhelm Beik (1822–1874) was born a peasant (Rättsepa Jüri by name) on an estate north of Dorpat. He had managed to attend primary school in Dorpat and then worked as assistant to a parish clerk in a nearby village. He became an assistant beadle at the university in 1851 and in 1867 rose to the rank of senior beadle. His son, Wilhelm Beik Jr., studied theology and law at the university, was active in the Estonian national awakening, and eventually became a lawyer and a parish-level judge in the town of Werro, south of Dorpat. The sons of peasant-born beadle Carl Hohlbeck (1796–1853) went on to have brilliant careers; Fromhold Hohlbeck studied medicine at the university and became the head physician of the Kronshtadt harbour near St. Petersburg, attaining the rank of Actual State Councilor – the fourth-highest position in the Russian Table of Ranks; son Carl Hohlbeck Jr. became assistant comptroller within the Russian armed forces; son Marcus Hohlbeck became a physician and worked in the university's medical clinic before leaving for positions in Russia and elsewhere in the empire, becoming in 1879 head physician of a hospital in Tbilisi and attaining the rank of State Councilor. Marcus Hohlbeck's son, Otto Hohlbeck – grandson of peasant-cum-beadle Carl Hohlbeck – also studied medicine at the University of Dorpat, though he had been born in the central Russian province of Viatka where his father was practicing medicine. Otto Hohlbeck travelled the world as a physician in the Red Cross, serving in South Africa and the Far East; he also obtained further training in Germany, Switzerland and France before eventually returning to Dorpat to work as a surgeon at the university hospital. Thus, within three generations members of single family advanced from village peasant life to travel and serve throughout the Russian Empire and the world, holding positions of high responsibility, largely as a result of social mobility made possible by employment in the University of Dorpat.

A lacuna in this book is a lack of a discussion of the influence of the First World War and the revolutionary events of 1917 on university employees. Such coverage might be expected as the book's subtitle declares that developments to 1918 are included. What role did employees have in the evacuation of university property to Russia that began in 1915? What part did they play in the so-called *Landesuniversität* that functioned in German-occupied Dorpat in the fall of 1918? Only in the very brief Chapter 10, on employees' own voluntary and self-help organizations, is there a brief treatment of efforts by the University of Dorpat Employees' Consumer Union, founded in 1917, to help its members secure goods during

the difficult conditions during the war. This group was replaced by other similar organizations in 1918.

The concluding chapter, titled “Conclusions and Thoughts” recapitulates the book’s main arguments, placing them within the framework of familiar themes of Estonian history such as ethnicity/nationality, urbanization, rural to urban career patterns, Baltic particularism, and Russification. Leppik writes in this conclusion that by the end of the nineteenth century “Laboratory and other university assistants and chancery employees included the full range of local social groups, indicating movement toward professionalisation among those of differing social estate. Children no longer continued in their parents occupations, but instead strove higher or tried their efforts elsewhere (...). The university as employer taught peasants to associate with those in higher society, trained them as professionals, and taught the tolerance necessary to move within a multicultural environment, thus nurturing intellectual maturity. The university gave rise to social activism and new ideas in the city” (p. 273).

Leppik estimates that by 1918 Estonians made up some 50 per cent of mid-level university employees and 80 per cent among lower-level employees. More significantly, “the imperial university left as an inheritance to the Estonian Republic a university in which four fifths of those employees with the needed skills [for the university’s success; B.D.W.] were already in place” (p. 274).

The book is richly illustrated with some 76 photographs and other images, such as reproduced primary sources. At the back of the book are appendices listing university employees, by category, over the time period the book examines, as well as other relevant information about these employees. Also included is a twenty-page English-language summary; it reviews the book’s objectives, methodology and sources (this is material translated from the book’s introduction) and presents a translation of the bulk of the “Conclusions and Thoughts” chapter. This summary cannot, however, encapsulate the fascinating detail presented in this admirable book.

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