

GENIUS LOCI

LASZLOVSZKY 60

edited by
Dóra Mérai
and

Ágnes Drosztmér, Kyra Lyublyanovics,
Judith Rasson, Zsuzsanna Papp Reed,
András Vadas, Csilla Zatykó



ARCHAEOLINGUA

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Table of contents

Tabula gratulatoria	v
Kiadói előszó	vi
Publisher's Preface	viii
Köszöntő	x
Salutation	xi

Boundaries, Frontier Zones / Határvonalak, határvidékek

ALEKS PLUSKOWSKI – ALEX BROWN – SEWERYN SZCZEPANSKI – ROWENA BANERJEA – DANIEL MAKOWIECKI What Does a Frontier Look Like? The Biocultural Dynamics of the Lower Vistula Borderland in the Middle Ages	2
STEPHEN POW The Mongol Empire's Northern Border: Re-evaluating the Surface Area of the Mongol Empire	8
IAN WOOD Two Roman Frontiers and Their Sub-Roman Afterlife	14

Crossing Borders / Határokon át

SZAKÁCS BÉLA ZSOLT Gyulafirátót, avagy a rendi építészeti hagyományok átjárhatósága	19
CRISTOPHER MIELKE A Queen's Crusading Connections: Yolanda of Courtenay, the Fifth Crusade, and the Military Orders	25
BÁRÁNY ATTILA Angol keresztés a magyar végeken: Robert de Champlayn	28
CRISTIAN GAȘPAR Trespassing Pigs, Sons of Whores, and Randy Dogs: Marginalia on a Medieval Document from Caransebeș/Karánsebes	32
VADAS ANDRÁS A kecskeméti marhahajtók megpróbáltatásai és egy végvár jóllakott őrsége	38
LÁSZLÓ KONTLER Borders and Crossings: A Jesuit Scientist in the Whirlwind of Enlightened Reform	41
PAUKOVICS GERGŐ Hajszja az örök fiatalságért. Dr. Voronoff és a dübörgő 20-as évek	45
PINKE ZSOLT – STEPHEN POW A Gangesz-deltából a globális porondra: történeti ökológiai szempontok a kolera kórokozó (<i>Vibrio cholerae</i>) elterjedési területének átalakulásához	50
MARCELL SEBŐK Tangible Cultural Heritage: The Early History of Blue Jeans	55

Inhabiting the Landscape / Élet a tájban

SÓFALVI ANDRÁS	
A Barcaság határai és 13. század eleji településképe a Német Lovagrend adományleveleiben	60
NIKOLINA ANTONIĆ	
The Hospitallers' Estate of Čičan and its Neighbors: Spatial Analysis Yields New Information	64
ÜNIGE BENCZE	
The Abbey of Meszes: New Insights on the Site Location	68
MÓGÁNÉ ARADI CSILLA – MOLNÁR ISTVÁN	
Kísérlet a bárdudvarnok-szentbenedeki premontrei prépostság környezeti rekonstrukciójára	72
BEATRIX ROMHÁNYI	
Monasteries along the Danube	77
PUSZTAI TAMÁS – P. FISCHL KLÁRA	
A dél-borsodi síkság bronzkori és középkori településstruktúrájának összehasonlítása	82
VIZI MÁRTA	
Komplex régészeti kutatás egy egykori dél-dunántúli mezőváros területén	89
BATIZI ZOLTÁN	
Fagyosasszony és Kammerhof	95
PÁLÓCZI HORVÁTH ANDRÁS	
A középkori Kenderes településszerkezete	99
SZŐCS PÉTER LEVENTE	
Adatok Nagybánya és vidéke középkori egyházi topográfiájához	103
ZATYKÓ CSILLA	
Eltűnt berzencei malmok	108
SZABÓ PÉTER	
Középkori cseh erdőgazdálkodás a choustníki uradalom erdőszámadásainak tükrében	113
ANDREA KISS	
Before and After the Great Heat and Drought of 1540: Multiannual Trends of Grape and Grain Harvest Dates in the Vienna Hospital Accounts	117
LÁSZLÓ BARTOSIEWICZ	
“Kleine Fische, gute Fische” – But Sturgeon is Great	121
LYUBLJANOVICS KYRA	
Vad háziállat, házi vadállat: Számi rénszarvastartás a középkori és kora újkori Norvégiában	126
JUDITH RASSON	
Mountains in the Lifeways and History of Northern Macedonia	138
JEREMY MIKECZ	
Crossing the Abyss: The Apurímac Canyon at the Time of the Spanish Invasion of Peru (1533)	142

Busy Places / Nyüzsgő terek

PETROVICS ISTVÁN	
Újabb adatok Pécs késő középkori történetéhez	147
URBÁN MÁTÉ	
Lokális búcsújáró helyek a késő középkori Nyugat-Dunántúlon	151
BALÁZS NAGY	
The Marketplace of Csütörtök – A Local Market in Fourteenth-Century Hungary	156
KATALIN SZENDE	
The Sopron Fish Market	159
GERHARD JARITZ	
The Craftsman's Voice and Words in Late Medieval Austrian Urban Space	165

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ANA MARIA GRUIA Healthcare in Cluj in the Sixteenth Century: Overlapping Professions	168
ANA MARINKOVIĆ John Capistran's Mantle and the Early Propaganda of Franciscan Observant Cults in Dubrovnik	171
SABINA MADGEARU Ceremonial Space in Front of Medieval Buda: An Illuminated Fifteenth-Century French Vision	175
VÉGH ANDRÁS Óbuda látképeken	177

Layers of the Past / A múlt rétegei

KODOLÁNYI JUDIT Templomok és temetők a visegrádi Sibrik-dombon	181
ROSTA SZABOLCS Egy új lehetőség kapujában – tatárjárás kori védművek a Kiskunságban	186
BOTÁR ISTVÁN Árpád-kori edényégető kemence Csíksomlyón	193
PETAR PARVANOV Fire and Stone: Placing Flints in Graves in Late Medieval Kaliakra	197
GYARMATI JÁNOS Kumpi Wasi. Textilműhely egy inka tartományi központban	201
ZSUZSANNA PAPP REED Post It: Notes from Thirteenth-Century St Albans	207
VALERY REES The Salt of Genius: Marsilio Ficino on Food, Spices, and Nutrition	213
ROSSINA KOSTOVA The Mother of God Monastery near Varna, Bulgaria: More about Missionary Monasteries in Bulgaria in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries	217
DANIEL ZIEMANN The Imperial Abbey of Corvey in the Ninth and Tenth Century: At the Crossroads of Power	221
VIRÁGOS GÁBOR Kartal vagy Cyko? Kísérlet egy középkori nemesi család történetének rekonstruálására	226
TÓTH BOGLÁRKA – BOTÁR ISTVÁN A sepsikilyéni unitárius templom tetőszerkezeteinek kormeghatározása	244
RÁCZ MIKLÓS Egy tiszazugi újkori négyosztatú ház – Dokumentálás és építéstörténet	248

Objects beneath Our Feet / Tárgyak a föld alól

LANGÓ PÉTER A Tiszakeszi-Szódadombon talált kora Árpád-kori kereszt	254
RÁCZ TIBOR – NAGY BALÁZS Tatárjárás kori kincslelet Jászkarajenőről	258
SZENDE LÁSZLÓ Lehetett-e hadijelvény a csajági kereszt?	267
NÓRA UJHELYI Thoughts about Medieval Book Fittings from the Castle of Visegrád	270
MÁRIA VARGHA – THOMAS KÜHTREIBER Treasures of the “Lower Ten Thousand”? Hoards of Iron Objects	273

TABLE OF CONTENTS

K. NÉMETH ANDRÁS „Sarlóját ez okért bős fegyverré köszörülte” Késő középkori kiegyenesített sarló Kospa falu helyéről	280
MAXIM MORDOVIN A Collection of Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Cloth Seals from Szolnok	285
TÜNDE KOMORI Ottomans in Pest in the Light of “Luxury” Ceramics: Four Cups from Kígyó Street	289
WICKER ERIKA A 17. századi rácszentpéteri kincslelet	294

Marking the Place / Helyek és jelek

CSERNUS SÁNDOR Keresztes családtörténet és kőbe vésett emlékezet	300
LŐVEI PÁL A pilisszántói keresztes kő legendája	305
MÉRAI DÓRA Sügérek a Nyárádméntén: Sigér Mátyás síremléke leporolva	311
VESZPRÉMY LÁSZLÓ A bambergi lovas szobra és Szent István	316
TAKÁCS MIKLÓS A pétervárad-tekiai reneszánsz kőfaragvány	321
ANNELI RANDLA What and Whom Should We Remember? The Case of the Teutonic Order’s Church and Castle in Pöide, Livonia	325

Heritage Sites, Sacred Places / Örökségi helyszínek, szent helyek

ALEKSANDAR PANTIĆ The Ambiguity of Heritage Interpretation: A Late Roman Tomb in Brestovik, Serbia	330
GYÖRGY ENDRE SZÓNYI Rocamadour: Monastic Center, Pilgrimage Place, Art Historical Interest, World Heritage Site	335
KATEŘINA HORNÍČKOVÁ A Penitent Judas Iscariot: An Exemplum of Christian Morals on the Eve of Hussitism?	339
JAMES PLUMTREE Buddha, Lenin, and the Prophet Muhammad Approaching the Landscape and Cultural Heritage of Issyk-Ata	343
ROBERT SHARP The Thames Estuary: The Cultural Heritage and Memory of the Thames Estuary at Southend-on-Sea	349
ESZTER SPÁT Constructing Religio-Ritual Heritage: The New Shrine of Shekhsê Batê in Khetar, Northern Iraq	353
ZSUZSANNA RENNER Delhi, Old and New: Changing Cityscapes and the Cultural Heritage of India’s Capital City	357
FELD ISTVÁN Pseudovár vagy történeti rekonstrukció?	364
ILON GÁBOR A velemi régészeti témaparkról	371
WOLLÁK KATALIN Örökség alapú fejlesztés Kölkeden	374

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Places of Memory / Az emlékezet helyei

JÁNOS BAK	
Nádor 20 Capriccio	380
SZENTPÉTERI JÓZSEF	
Pilistól Tételig. Elektronikus levélféle a 60 esztendőös Laszlovszky Józsefnek	382
RICHARD HODGES	
Scarlino in the 1980s, Forty Years On	386
KLANICZAY GÁBOR	
Egy hozzászólás Kremsben	390

The Craftsman's Voice and Words in Late Medieval Austrian Urban Space

GERHARD JARITZ*

Material culture is a complex feature, and its changes can be regarded as a result of different influences, ...¹

Sensory factors have received specific attention in historical, archaeological, and art historical research,² particularly in studies on the history of material culture.³ This contribution concentrates on various aspects of the spoken word in the contexts of late medieval urban crafts and craftsmen, that is, their voice(s) and reception. The geographical focus is Austrian urban space.

References to the spoken words of craftsmen appear regularly in late medieval urban normative sources and guild regulations, sometimes also in court evidence and in pieces of narrative literature. These references either touched upon or tried to regulate various aspects of verbal communication, from personal invectives to advertising and the appraisal of products.

There is evidence for the prohibition of the use of obscene words by masters and, in particular, journeymen, especially in the presence of women or virgins.⁴ This meant the use of blasphemous or unseemly words or swearing, which was allowed neither in public nor during work,⁵ and other, so-called “prohibited” words mostly uttered in craftsmen’s quarrels with each other, in a workshop or in guild meetings.⁶

The large variety of such particular aspects of the craftsmen’s voice and words, mostly in negative contexts, can be shown in one example; in 1505, the crafts and guild regulations of blacksmiths from the town of Wiener Neustadt, south of Vienna, specify that:

“every journeyman or apprentice should be fined who used forbidden words against an-

other one in the workshop, in the master’s house, in the hospice, or at another place. If one smith would have to discuss some matter with another one, then it should only be done in the brotherhood of the smiths and nowhere else. And no journeyman or apprentice should use violence in words and works against his master’s wife, daughters, or maidservants. No master should entice a journeyman or an apprentice from another master.”⁷

Two Viennese regulations deal with the obligation of journeymen to keep silent when ordered.⁸

Negative competition inside a guild or group of craftsmen could also be connected with the voices and words of craftsmen as, for instance, the regulations for barber-surgeons from Wiener Neustadt show, in which spoken words play a particularly important, that is, dangerous, role in different respects,⁹ including bad words masters and journeymen might say to each other in the guild or gossip *von einem haus in das ander* (from one house to the other). The regulations also cover male and female barber-surgeons’ “advertising” — inciting negative competition by trying to lure customers away from one another:

“Any male or female barber-surgeon who asks people or sends after them or gives them presents so that they have their bath with them and not with another barber-surgeon, each of them is obliged to give as a fine four pounds of wax to the parish church; nobody should entice the customers of others.”¹⁰

Barber-surgeons sometimes seem to have enjoyed a specific place in regulations, not always because of conflicts with regard to their verbal communication. The 1483 regulations from the South Styrian town of Radkersburg stipulate that they should not run naked out of their

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bathing huts and should be dressed covering themselves down to their knees. Neither masters nor journeymen should whistle at a married woman or a virgin.¹¹

Competition, as shown in the example of the Wiener Neustadt barber-surgeons, was an important aspect to consider in late medieval crafts and craft communities such as guilds, brotherhoods, and so on. It was understood that there should be no dishonest competition among the members of a craft community. Such dishonest competition was often based on (public) advertising, false praise of one's own products or negative criticism of another's wares.¹²

Concerning the public advertisement of products, craftsmen's cries, like the well-known *cris de Paris*,¹³ or the "cries of London,"¹⁴ are familiar in both text and image. The first relevant regulation to be found in an analysis of Austrian guild regulations and other urban laws is from Vienna, dealing with fishmongers' cries a fortnight before Ash Wednesday.¹⁵ Other references to the cries of products regularly concentrate on prohibitions of dishonest competition. For instance, the craft and guild regulations from 1458 for bakers in the South Styrian town of Pettau, today Ptuj in Slovenia, refer to the yearly market to be held on Saint Oswald's day (August 5).¹⁶ The regulation states that the bakers should participate at this market with chasteness, virtue, and rationality, without fighting and beating, and *an geschrei*, that is, without cries.

Sometimes the orders—for example, the bakers' regulations from the small Upper Styrian town of Murau—were surprisingly detailed. In 1499, the judge and the town council issued the order that at the places and stalls where bread and rolls were sold by bakers or the so-called bread guards, none of them should publicly advertise their products and ask the customers to buy from them because they sold good bread and none of them should describe the bread of others as bad. Only the products' outer appearance of quality mattered, and customers were to buy from where they wanted and preferred without being exhorted.¹⁷ In 1514, this regulation was extended and formulated in even more detail. The Murau town council proclaimed that there should be a bread guard and bread tables in the arches near the toll booth. The bread guard was

to collect the bread from the different bakers and put it on the bread tables. Each week he should change and put the bread of each baker on another part of the bread tables. Moreover, he should not tell anyone which loaf came from a specific baker. He could divulge this information only when the lord or the town judge asked. Also, no baker was allowed to tell customers on which part of the bread table they would find his bread. If customers stated that they would like to have bread from a specific baker, the bread guard was to tell them just to take any, whichever they wanted. But the bread guard was also allowed to say, "If you really want bread from this baker, then go to his house."¹⁸

This prohibition on advertising and, in particular, not allowing customers to know whose product they bought, was upheld to keep peace in the craft community. It could be different and often less neutral in other cases. For instance, a regulation of 1521 for potters in the Styrian capital, Graz, determined a specific hierarchy of the different craftsmen: the oldest master should have his stall at the top, followed by the second oldest, and so on. If foreigners were offering their pottery they were to be allowed to do so, but at the lowest place in the row.¹⁹ This way, customers were informed about the products through indirect advertising and without any verbal information. In cases when "cries" were not prohibited as such, they could still be the subject of regulation for quality identification reasons, as the following Nuremberg ruling about *clamatores vini*, that is, wine criers, shows: they were to advertise the wine for what it genuinely was, Franconian wine as wine from Franconia, wine from the region of the Neckar River as such, Alsatian wine as coming from Alsace, and Italian wine as originating from Italy.²⁰

Competing by public advertisement in the context of the manner and place of sale, could also be subject to regulation and can also be seen in connection with the craftsmen's voice and words. The 1511 regulation for furriers from the Styrian town of Bruck says that they should only sell at public markets as selling their fur products at individuals' homes was prohibited.²¹

Problems of, and discourse about, public advertising also became part of late medieval comic and satirical German literature, for instance, the

story about Till Eulenspiegel and his experience with a butcher's advertising.²² As Eulenspiegel was passing the butchers' row, one butcher said to him that he should take a joint. Eulenspiegel agreed, took the meat and left. The butcher followed him and asked him to pay. Eulenspiegel argued that the butcher had not said anything about paying, just about taking the joint, and invited the other butchers at the market as witnesses. As the advertising butcher regularly lured away customers from his colleagues and they were angry about this, they all supported Eulenspiegel, who then got the meat without paying. This can be seen as a kind of testimony about the problems with competitive advertising in the context of the equality of preconditions and protection of the craft, the guild, and its representatives.

As József Laszlovszky stated some time ago, and has always adhered to in his own research,²³ this contribution once again shows that any study on the material culture of the Middle Ages must also take into account various possible non-material influences. Sensory aspects play a particular and important role in this respect.

Notes

- ¹ József Laszlovszky, "Social Stratification and Material Culture in 10th-14th-century Hungary," *Medium Aevum Quotidianum* 22 (1991): 32.
- ² See, for example, Mark Michael Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Jo Day, ed., *Making Senses of the Past: Toward a Sensory Archaeology* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013); Yannis Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses: Human Experience, Memory, and Affect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); François Quiviger, *The Sensory World of Italian Renaissance Art* (New York: Reaktion Books, 2010).
- ³ See, for example, Linda Hurcombe, "A Sense of Materials and Sensory Perception in Concepts of Materiality," *World Archaeology* 39 (2007): 532–545.
- ⁴ E.g., for journeyman tailors see: Martin Scheutz et al., *Wiener Neustädter Handwerksordnungen (1432 bis Mitte 16. Jahrhundert)* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1997), 59, no. 16 (1459, May 17); Markus Gneiß, *Das Wiener Handwerksordnungsbuch (1364–1555): Edition und Kommentar* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2017), 233, no. 82 (1442, March 17). For journey-

men in general, see: Gneiß, *Handwerksordnungsbuch*, 524, no. 345 (1519, March 22).

- ⁵ For example, for Graz potters, see: Fritz Popelka, *Schriftdenkmäler des steirischen Gewerbes* (Graz: Wirtschaftsförderungsinstitut, 1950), 247, no. 169 (1521, May 25); for journeyman knife makers, see: Gneiß, *Handwerksordnungsbuch*, 264, no. 111 (1470, December 18); for journeyman potters, *ibid.*, 469, no. 309 (1489, November 26); for journeyman shoemakers, e.g., "if blaspheming the honour of their master's house ...," see: *ibid.*, 476, no. 312 (1495, February 10).
- ⁶ With regard to these different prohibited words, for journeyman bakers and millers, see: Popelka, *Schriftdenkmäler* 239-240, no. 165 (1516 July 11); for journeyman tailors, see: Scheutz, *Handwerksordnungen*, 59 (1459 May 17); for journeyman furriers, e.g., "[i]f one calls the other son of a bitch or uses other prohibited words ...," Gneiß, *Handwerksordnungsbuch*, 403, no. 252 (1445, April 20); for journeyman glove makers, *ibid.*, 524, no. 345 (1519, March 22); for journeyman blacksmiths, *ibid.*, 537, no. 352 (1532, May 6).
- ⁷ For blacksmiths, shear- and scissors-smiths, see Scheutz, *Handwerksordnungen*, 121–126, no. 36 (1505, July 7).
- ⁸ For journeyman bag makers, see: Gneiß, *Handwerksordnungsbuch*, 515, no. 340 (1518, February 22); for journeymen in general, see: *ibid.*, 525, no. 345 (1519, March 22).
- ⁹ Scheutz, *Handwerksordnungen*, 82–83, no. 25 (1476, January 23).
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ Popelka, *Schriftdenkmäler*, 165–170 (1483, September 29).
- ¹² Concerning Italy, see Gunnar Mickwitz, *Die Kartellfunktionen der Zünfte und ihre Bedeutung bei der Entstehung des Zunftwesens* (Helsinki: Akademische Buchhandlung, 1936; repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1968), 22 and 46.
- ¹³ See, for instance, Laurent Vissière, "Les cris de Paris: Naissance d'un genre littéraire et musical (xiii^e–xvi^e siècles)," in Clément Janequin, *un musicien au milieu des poètes*, Actes du colloque de Paris (25 et 26 mars 2010), ed. Olivier Halévy et al. (Paris: Société française de musicologie, 2013), 87–116.
- ¹⁴ Eric Wilson, "Plagues, Fairs, and Street Cries: Sounding out Society and Space in Early Modern London," *Modern Language Studies* 25, no. 3 (1995): 1–42.
- ¹⁵ Gneiß, *Handwerksordnungsbuch*, 367–368, no. 222 (c. 1401).
- ¹⁶ Popelka, *Schriftdenkmäler*, 124, no. 93 (1458, March 13).
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 195, no. 140 (1499).
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 230–231, no. 162 (1514, February 5).
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 250, no. 169 (1521, May 25).
- ²⁰ Gerhard Jaritz, "Handwerkliche Produktion und Qualität im Spätmittelalter," in *Handwerk und Sachkultur im Spätmittelalter*, ed. Harry Kühnel (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1988), 44.
- ²¹ Popelka, *Schriftdenkmäler*, 225, no. 158 (1511, July 14).
- ²² Georg Bollenbeck, "Die Krise des Handwerks in spätmittelalterlichen Schwanktexten," in *Deutsches Handwerk in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit. Sozialgeschichte – Volkskunde – Literaturgeschichte*, ed. Rainer S. Elkar (Göttingen: Otto Schwartz, 1983), 315–316.
- ²³ See note 1.