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# LOTYNIŠKI UŽRAŠAI ŠIUOLAIKINIO EUROPOS MIESTO SOCIOKULTŪRINĖJE ERDVĖJE

Contemporary Latin Inscriptions  
in the Sociocultural Space of European City

## SUMMARY

The article investigates the tradition of using the Latin language as a universal representative of ancient culture and a key link in the intellectual and cultural integration of Europe. The dead language did not only receive a new life by drawing parallels with modernity and maximum proximity to the realities of today, but it also expanded the field of its use. Latin inscriptions on various objects are an integral part of the image of a modern city; they are both reception and propaganda of the ancient heritage. The article defines the concept of *inscription*, makes a classification of the inscriptions, presents their analysis with cultural and historical comments. The focus is laid on Latin inscriptions in the socio-cultural space of the European continuum of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The use of the Latin language in the creation of the inscription demonstrates the intellectual level, value attitudes, creative self-expression, or exclusivity.

## SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama lotynų kalbos, svarbios Europos intelektualinės ir kultūrinės integracijos grandies, atstovaujančios universaliai antikinei kultūrai, vartojimo tradicija. Mirusi kalba ne tik atgijo naujam gyvenimui, bet ir išplėtė savo vartojimo lauką, brėždama paraleles su dabartimi bei maksimaliai priartėdama prie šiandienos realijų. Lotyniški užrašai ant įvairių objektų yra neatsiejama šiuolaikinio miesto įvaizdžio dalis: taip rodoma pagarba senovės paveldui ir jis viešinamas. Straipsnyje apibrėžiama „užrašo“ sąvoka, pateikiama užrašų klasifikacija bei jų analizė su kultūriniais ir istoriniais komentarais. Dėmesio centre atsiduria lotyniški užrašai XX ir XXI a. Europos sociokultūrinėje erdvėje. Lotynų kalbos vartojimas kuriant užrašus rodo intelektualinį lygį, vertybines nuostatas, kūrybinę saviraišką ar išskirtinumą.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: šiuolaikinė lotynų kalba, lotyniški užrašai, antika, skolinių šaltiniai, šiuolaikinis miestas.

KEY WORDS: contemporary Latin, Latin inscriptions, antiquity, sources of borrowings, modern city.

## INTRODUCTION

The Latin language is an important component of European culture today. For a long time, it was not only a means of intellectual and cultural integration of Europe, but also the only official written language in many countries: until 1733 in England, 1784 – in the Czech Republic, 1795 – in Poland, but in Hungary it lost its state status in 1844. In Croatia, the Latin language was the official language of the Croatian parliament (Sabor) until 1847. Science, education, church, law, and diplomacy were based on the Latin language until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Even after leaving the colloquial use, the Latin language continued to evolve and be actively used in various spheres of life, eventually becoming the cultural reality of Europe and a means of relaying the traditions of the ancient world (see Korolova 2019). Its use can be explained not so much by practical needs, but by status and additional value content. Ch. Laes, a well-known supporter of the *Latinitas viva* movement, considers the Latin language as „the language of world culture, which is a connecting link among various peoples“:

Denominatio mortis certe linguæ Ægyptiacæ vel Gothicæ melius convenit, quarum traditio aliquo temporis momento est interrupta, vix autem apta est linguæ quam semper adhibebant homines, licet nonnumquam essent pauci, nullo die interrupto inde ab excidio Imperii Romani. Unde ego malim dicere *linguam Latinam esse linguam cultus civilis, vinculum inter gentes* – id quod libenter confirmo ambiguitate status mortui vel vivi prætermissa. (Laes 2014: 3).

Other Latinists agree with his opinion, such as, R. Carfagni, the founder of the *Schola Latina*:

This international community of intellectuals, this republic of letters, of which the scholars were proudly and consciously part, reaches the contemporary age, and allows us to integrate our definition of Latin, as a language once alive, then dead, and, finally, as a means of transmitting knowledge and culture. In short, a historical language that spans the centuries, making its way to us. (Carfagni).

The following research considers the issues of determining the direct role and place of the Latin language in the modern world: Barandovská-Frank V. (Barandovská-Frank 1995), Beard H. (Beard 2014), Burke P. (Burke 2006), Butterfield D. (Butterfield 2011), Capellanus G. (Capellanus 1966), Carfagni R. (Carfagni), Desessard C. (Desessard 1991), Eichenseer C. (Eichenseer 1999), Feye A. (Feye 2011), Ford Ph. (Ford 2000), Fritsch A. (Fritsch 2002), Janson T. (Janson 2006), Laes Ch. (Laes 2014), Lather R. (Lather 2013), Leonhardt J. (Leonhardt 2009), Llewellyn N. (Llewellyn 1991), Loch M. (Loch 2013), Ludwig W. (Ludwig 2003), Stroh W. (Stroh 2007), Visser E. (Visser 1995), Waquet F. (Waquet 2003) et al.

The use of Latin inscriptions in the space of a modern city remains a relatively ignored area of research. Even though the inscriptions do not only influence the formation of its appearance, but they also characterize the cultural, social, ideological, religious, and other needs of society, reflecting the characteristic features of a particular era. It has to

be noted the almost complete absence of generalising works but for the presence of a few reviews, mainly of an introductory nature, devoted to one or another aspect of the problem.

The scientific novelty of the research deals with the fact that for the first time, using numerous examples, it shows the continuity of the Latin epigraphic heritage in the modern world, reveals its relationship with the traditions of antiquity, and the information obtained is systematised according to various criteria.

A characteristic feature of the assimilation of the heritage of antiquity was the desire to integrate the ancient culture and use it to enrich the native culture. Latin inscriptions, which are observed in the visual appearance of any modern city, has become one of the most illustrative examples of the reception of ancient culture, because „monuments and monumental writings function as portals that connect times and spaces and sites where memories are constructed and commemorated“ (Smoak 2019).

By inscriptions, we mean a text applied to a material object that has meaning and functions in logical connection with the object to which it is applied, or with a broader objective situation in which it is immersed. For more details, see Panciera (S. Panciera 2012).

Traditionally, there are secular and religious inscriptions (the latter are not the subject of our research in this publication), but according to the criterion of social functions – official (texts created at the direction or with the permission of secular or church authorities) and unofficial, i.e. they are created by private individuals.

In the antique period, the main purpose of creating inscriptions was the presentation and specification of information about an object or object, namely its name, definition, nomination, date and other information. In addition to this designation, which has stood the test of history and the original Latin maxims, they are used in the modern world to cultivate appropriate ideals and values, to decorate various objects and structures, to stylise in order to create a single compositional ensemble. Inscriptions are often a tribute to fashion, a way of creative expression, demonstrating exclusivity and a desire to stand out. They reflect the level of education, moral principles, cultural interests, life priorities, attitude to the surrounding world and so on. We can distinguish the following main functions of modern Latin inscriptions: 1) informative / representative; 2) pragmatic; 3) aesthetic; 4) cumulative; 5) expressive; 6) appellate; 7) cognitive. The listed functions can be combined.

Inscription typology in terms of content includes *tituli sepulcrales* (tombstones), *tituli operum publicorum* (construction (in honor of the construction of a building), *tituli sacri* (initiatory or votive), *tituli honorarii* (glorification or honorific).

The localisation of the inscriptions can be represented in the following way: 1) public buildings and structures; 2) monuments; 3) decorative structures etc. According to the method of execution, the inscription can be applied with paints, cut, or carved, as well as can be made of metal letters fixed on the surface of the object. In terms of structure, the inscription is usually a phrase or statement. There are original phrases that repeat classic patterns or authentic sayings.

## PERPETUATION OF HERITAGE

First, we would like to dwell on those samples that continue the ancient Roman traditions. For Benito Mussolini's ideology, imperial Rome became the basis for the restoration of the empire and the unification of the nation. From 1934 to 1940, systematic excavations, reconstruction and development of the so-called *Zona Augustea* were carried out. On the facades of the buildings of the Place de la Emperor Augustus, erected during this period, we see relief sculptures, mosaic frescoes and Latin inscriptions. One of them is a classic example of *tituli honorarii*:

HUNC LOCUM UBI AUGUSTI MANES  
VOLITANT PER AURAS POSTQUAM  
IMPERATORIS MAUSOLEUM EX SAECU-  
LORUM TENEBRIS EST EXTRACTUM  
ARAEQUE PACIS DISIECTA MEMBRA  
REFECTA MUSSOLINI DUX VETERIBUS  
ANGUSTIIS DELETIS SPLENDIDIORI-  
BUS VIIS AEDIFICIIS AEDIBUS AD HU-  
MANITATIS MORES APTIS ORNAN-  
DUM CENSUIT ANNO MDCCCXLI A  
F. R. XVIII

This is the place where the soul of Augustus flies through the breezes, after the mausoleum of the emperor was extracted from the darkness of the ages and the scattered pieces of the altar of peace were restored, Mussolini the leader ordered the old narrow places to be destroyed and the location to be adorned with streets, buildings, and shrines fitting for the ways of humanity in the year 1940, in the eighteenth year of the Fascist Era.

The stone laid by Edward VII in 1907 in the foundation of Bangor University,

with Welsh and Latin inscriptions, is a model of *tituli operum publicorum*:

HVNC LAPIDEM POSVIT EDWARDVS  
VII BRITANNIARVM OMNIVM REX  
NONO DIE JVLII MCMVII (*Welsh*: Gos-  
odwyd y garreg hon gan y Brenin Ed-  
ward VII y 9fed o Orffennaf 1907).

A classic example of *tituli sepulcrales* is located in London. In 1995, during construction, the remains of a young girl aged 13–17 were discovered. She is believed to have died between 350 and 400 AD, when London was the Roman settlement of Londinium. The remains were taken to the London Museum, but in April 2007 it was returned to its original place, erecting a memorial with the traditional Latin funerary inscription:

DIS MANIBUS. PUELLA INCOGNITA  
LONDINIENSIS HIC SEPULTA EST (To  
the spirits of the dead the unknown  
young girl from Roman London lies bur-  
ied here).

Also, Latin inscriptions were often used for decorative decoration of various structures, public and private buildings. The sources for modern Latin inscriptions are mainly aphorisms, mottos and slogans, statements of famous personalities, quotes from works.

The phrase NON SCHOLAE, SED VITAE DISCIMUS (We do not learn for school, but for life) is accompanied by a picture of Erasmus of Rotterdam, a former student of the Latin school in Denter, the Netherlands. The composition on the skylight above the entrance appeared after the reconstruction of the building in 1992. The same phrase in a somewhat shortened form – NON

SCHOLAE, SED VITAE – is the motto of Hermann-Böse-Gymnasium (Bremen), founded in 1905, and adorns its building. The original dictum *Non vitae, sed scholae discimus* by Seneca (Sen. Ep. CVI, 12).

The office of INA, the state life insurance company (Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni) in Via Sallustiana in Rome, opened in 1927, is adorned with a majestic Latin inscription over the three arches of the monumental entrance:

PROVIDENTIAE MUNUS RES PUBLICA  
SIBI VINDICAT (The State claims the  
duty of Security).

Another building of the same organisation, located in the Piazza Sant'Andrea della Valle, is notable for the image of Romulus, Remus and the she-wolf on the top floor loggia and a Latin inscription above the entrance gate. They are compiled by the historian and poet Raffaello Santarelli. The first line is written with a dactylic hexameter, the second with a pentameter; together they form the so-called elegiac distich:

ITALIAE FINES PROMOVIT BELLICA  
VIRTUS / ET NOVUS IN NOSTRA FUN-  
DITUR URBE DECOR (The virtue of war  
expands the borders of Italy / while a new  
beauty takes shape in our city). The date  
is indicated below: ANNO DOMINI MC-  
MXXXVII IMPERII PRIMO (1937, in the  
first year of the empire's existence).

Another inscription by Raffaello Santarelli is engraved on a beautiful fountain located near Villa Borghese:

FONS CANIT VITAE LAUDEM MUR-  
MURE SUA (With its murmur the source  
sings the hymn to life).

The fountain, known as Fonte Gaia or Fonte dei Satiri or Fonte dei Conigli,

was built between 1927 and 28 by the sculptor Giovanni Nicolini.

The phrase ANTIQUA TAMEN JUVENESCO (I am old but renew my youth) is of great interest. It has been adorning the facade of the Huntly House in Edinburgh since 1932. It fully reflects the current state of the Latin language, which has become a cultural reality in Europe.

The new bridge in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) over the Miljacka River, built in 2012, is adorned with the Latin inscription *Festina lente* (Make haste slowly), a translation of the original Greek dictum *σπεῦδε βραδέως*. The bridge looks like a ribbon with a peculiar knot in the central part. The project is based on the idea of creating a balance between the left and right banks of the river, as well as establishing a worldly and spiritual union between them. According to the Roman historian Suetonius (Suet. Aug., XXV. 4), this was one of the favourite expressions of the emperor Octavian Augustus. It was used as a motto many times – Emperor Titus, Cosimo Medici, English Earl of Onslow, and Erasmus of Rotterdam in his collection of sayings of *Adagia* calls the proverb „royal“.

The sculpture „Scales of Justice“ in Kolín, Czech Republic (2001) is decorated with the motto of the Holy Roman Emperor (1556–1564) Ferdinand I, who argued that justice must prevail at any cost:

FIAT IUSTITIA PEREAT MUNDUS (Let  
justice be done, though the world perish).

This expression in a slightly modified form can be seen on the facade of the Palazzo di Giustizia in Milan, built in 1932–40:

FIAT IUSTITIA NE PEREAT MUNDUS  
(Let Justice be done, so that the world  
won't perish).

Other Latin phrases related to the principles of jurisprudence were also used in the design of the building. Above the main entrance is:

IUSTITIA. IURIS PRAECEPTA SUNT HAEC: HONESTE VIVERE, ALTERUM NON LAEDERE, SUUM CUIQUE TRIBUERE (Justice. The precepts of the law are the following: to live honourably, to injure no one, to give everyone his due).

On the top left front is:

IURISPRUDENTIA EST DIVINARUM ATQUE HUMANARUM / RERUM NOTITIA IUSTI ATQUE INIUSTI SCIENTIA (Jurisprudence is the knowledge of things divine and human, and the science of what is just or unjust).

On the top right front is:

SUMUS AD IUSTITIAM NATI NEQUE OPINIONE, SED NATURA CONSTITUTUM EST IUS (We are born for justice and the law is based on nature, not opinion).

The first two quotes refer us to the *Digesta* collection of extracts from the works of Roman lawyers (D.1.1.10.1–2), the last to Cicero's treatise *De legibus* (Cic. Leg. 1.28).

The entrance to the modern building of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Maribor (Slovenia), built in 2012–2013, is decorated with the inscription:

QUOD SERIMUS METIMUS, QUOD DAMUS ACCIPIMUS (What we sow, we reap, what we give, we get).

This phrase is a quote from the collection of epigrams by Prosper of Aquitaine, a Christian writer and disciple of Augustine of Hippo (Prosp. Ep. XXXVIII).

In front of the entrance to the Great Hall of Charles University there is a

bronze memorial plaque to the victims of totalitarian regimes and the Second World War with the inscription:

VERITAS LABORAT NIMIS SAEPE, EXSTINGUITUR NUMQUAM (Truth is all too frequently eclipsed but never extinguished), which is a paraphrase from Titus Livy's *Ab Urbe condita* (Liv. 22.39,19)

The graffiti on the walls of the University of Salamanca, the oldest university in Spain and one of the four oldest universities in Europe, announces the visit of high-ranking guests. President of Panama Aristides Royo Sanchez are among them:

ARISTIDES ROYO REPUBLICAE PANAMENSIS PRAESES VNIVERSITATEM SVAM VISITAVIT A.D. CMLXXIX (Aristides Royo, President of the Republic of Panama, visited his university in 1979).

The Bock casemates in Luxembourg were replenished in 1963 with an inscription in honor of the millennium since its foundation, inscribed in bronze letters on the stone wall of the fortress. This inscription is interesting in that it is made with a dactylic hexameter. Its content is closely related to the date of the event, since it is also a chronogram. If we add up the large letters, which also denote numbers in Latin, we get 1963:

saeCLa DeCeM repLens / Legat Vrbs VestigIa prIsCa 963–1963 (Having completed ten centuries, the city shall keep its venerable vestiges).

The first mention of Luxembourg dates back to 963.

The Prague meridian on the Old Town Square is marked by a line paved with a different type of cobblestone, and a metal plate, placed there after

reconstruction in the 90s of the last century. With the help of a thin brass strip, the time was determined from 1652 to 1918, as it is evidenced by the Latin inscription:

MERIDIANUS QUO OLIM TEMPUS  
PRAGENSE DIRIGEBATUR (The Meridian that in bygone times set Prague time).

The Warsaw University Library, designed by Budzynski&Badowski in 2000, immediately became one of the attractions of the Polish capital. The entrance to the library is preceded by a transition zone, in which the symbolic gate of the „Shrine of Knowledge“ is located. A brass book fixed on a glass wall with a Latin inscription: HINC OMNIA (Hence everything) is located above them.

LUCEM DEMONSTRAT UMBRA (Shadow reveals the Light) is an inscription on a sundial in Neringa (Lithuania).

The same inscription adorns a ring-shaped sundial located in Frankfurt am Main (the opening took place in 1951, in 2004 the clock was moved to a new location) and a wall sundial in the yard of

renovated in 2007 residence Satlava nearby the Grand Square in Hradec Kralove.

Some of the modern inscriptions can be a little pretentious, like the inscription on the Donation Box at Wawel Castle, Krakow:

CRACOVIAE TOTIUS POLONIAE URBS  
CELEBERRIMA (Kraków the most famous of Polish cities).

And some of them are clearly not devoid of humor, like the inscription on the monument to an unknown artist in London's Tate Modern, displaying the works of modern art. The slightly awkward posture of the statue is explained by the ability to imitate the movements of people standing in front of it due to the built-in camera.

NON PLAUDITE MODO PECUNIAM  
JACITE (Do not applaud, just throw money)

It can be read on the pedestal. It is noteworthy that a mistake was made in the Latin phrase. The form imperativus praesentis 2 p. Pl. is formed analytically and has the following form: *nolite plaudĕre*.

## HERITAGE REFLECTION

At one time, the Latin language played a significant role in the formation of common European socio-cultural values, acting as a kind of code, understandable to every European. Today, the area of application of the Latin language continues to be very wide and significant. The use of this language in the space of a modern city is a conscious and purposeful reception of the ancient heritage by representatives of different countries.

Comparative analysis of Latin inscriptions represented in the socio-cultural space of the European continuum of the XX–early XXI centuries. The classical samples of the era of antiquity testifies to the borrowing of traditional elements, which is manifested in the very structure of the inscription, its artistic and stylistic design, tracing of established expressions and turns. The following types of inscriptions are represented: *tituli sepulcrales*,

*tituli operum publicorum, tituli sacri, tituli honorarii.* They cover various spheres of social life and express a set of certain values dictated by time, social and political events, ideology, traditions, etc. The dialogue of cultures is realised mainly by using aphorisms, mottos and slogans, quotations from the works and sayings of famous personalities, relevant for different eras. The original phrases that are authentic sayings are also represented.

Inscriptions tell us about victories and accomplishments, reflect our attitude to the world around us and focus on objects of art. They are a tribute to fashion, a way of creative expression, demonstrate exclusivity and a desire to stand out, often with playful statements. Most of the inscriptions are related to a specific situation or person. Reading them requires familiarity with the historical context. Modern authentic utterances assume the author's point of view on the thought contained in them. Also, in the process of applying an inscription on an object or object, those who are engaged in the selection of inscriptions for certain purposes are also involved, investing in them their understanding of the situation. Thus, the inscriptions allow us to get acquainted with the

thoughts and feelings of other people, they challenge us and encourages us to think about the meaning of what we have written for ourselves.

The main function of modern inscriptions is informative, i.e., function of presenting any knowledge about a subject or object. The pragmatic function is aimed at attracting attention and generating interest; aesthetic acts as a means of expressing the creative potential of the author; cumulative consolidates knowledge about the world, promotes their accumulation (accumulation), preservation and transmission from generation to generation; expressive expresses the inner state, emotions and position of the author or creator, materialises them in writing; the appellative function is to appeal to the recipient and induce him to certain reactions; cognitive is based on the property of the inscription to be the expression of thoughts. The listed functions tend to interbreed.

The appeal to the tradition of using Latin inscriptions in the socio-cultural space of modern European cities can be viewed as an act of reception of antiquity, simultaneously considering the lessons of the past and remembering the present realities.

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