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A SONG ABOUT THE HORRIBLE PTUJ PLAGUE OR HOW THE SLOVENIAN ELECTRONIC ARCHIVES CONTRIBUTES TO HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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Abstract:

On the example of the Virtual Archival Reading room and free access to digitized manuscripts from the Historical Archives in Ptuj, which are located in the Slovenian Electronic Archive (e-ARH.si), the experience of the historian (PhD student) is presented when determining the authenticity and credibility of archival sources whose content influenced the setting of the hypothesis in the article about the plague epidemic in the Zagreb area in 1682-1682. The aforementioned digitized material is compared with relevant sources in the Digital Library of Slovenia, an egdotic analysis is carried out and the importance of a free and holistic approach to digitized material in discovering the historical context and building a complete historical story is presented.

Keywords:

Jurij Hauptmanič, A song about the horrible Ptuj plague, Historical Archives in Ptuj, Slovenian Electronic Archives, Virtual Archival Reading room

Izvleček:

Pesem o strašni ptujski kugi ali kako slovenski elektronski arhiv pomaga pri zgodovinski raziskavi

Na primeru Virtualne arhivske čitalnice in prostega dostopa do digitaliziranih rokopisov iz fondov Zgodovinskega arhiva Ptuj, ki se nahajajo v Slovenskem elektronskem arhivu (e-ARH.si), so predstavljene izkušnje zgodovinarke (doktorske študentke) pri ugotavljanju avtentičnosti in verodostojnosti arhivskih virov, katerih vsebina je vplivala na postavitve hipoteze v članku o epidemiji kuge na zagrebškem območju v letih 1682–1682. Avtorica primerja omenjeno digitalizirano gradivo z relevantnimi viri v Digitalni knjižnici Slovenije, izvaja ekdotično analizo in predstavlja pomen prostega ter celostnega pristopa k digitaliziranemu gradivu pri odkrivanju zgodovinskega konteksta in gradnji celovite zgodovinske zgodbe.

Ključne besede:

Jurij Hauptmanič, Pesem o strašni ptujski kugi, Zgodovinski arhiv na Ptuj, Slovenski elektronski arhiv, Virtualna arhivska čitalnica

1. Introduction

While researching and writing an article about the plague epidemic in the Zagreb area in 1682-1683, a description of the symptoms of this disease, as found in the Song about the horrible Ptuj plague, is presented (Sikirić Assouline & Molnar, 2021).¹

A Song about the horrible Ptuj plague (original title: *Apologus carminicus de horrenda contagione Pettoviensi*, further: the Apolog), is a poetic work in 53 hexameter verses in Latin which was compiled by Jurij Hauptmanič, a Slovenian priest from the 17th century, Latin teacher and humanist. The Slovenian Biographical Lexicon (Slovenski biografski leksikon, further: SBL) calls Hauptmanič a humanist, but does not provide much information about him: "Hauptmanič Jurij, humanist, b. 13 apr. 1641 in Konjice, d. unknown when and where. Ordained as a priest in 1664, he pastored in Ruše, Konjice, Hoče and in 1677 became pastor at St. Martin in Hajdina, from where he returned to Konjice in 1692, where he still lived 1700. Ed. *Speculum diurnum ad pie iusteque vivendum in hoc saeculo pro singulis anni diebus in versus et historias deductum*, Labaci 1694." (Hauptmanič, SBL)).

Hauptmanič wrote the Apolog as the final part of his Ptuj Chronicle in German, which is contained in a manuscript of 46 pages. That manuscript is bound in a book² and today it is stored in the Historical Archives in Ptuj (further: ZAP) in the Manuscript collection under the signature SI_ZAP/0070_00035³.

Hauptmanič probably composed the Apolog around 1691, in the decade after the great plague epidemic that occurred from 1679 to 1682 and particularly strongly affected the Austrian and Slovenian countries. Hauptmanič was then the parish priest at St. Martin in Hajdina and witnessed the events. In addition to describing the anti-epidemic measures that were implemented in the area of the city of Ptuj and its surroundings in the Apolog, Hauptmanič also described the symptoms of the disease, which is the only so far known testimony of a contemporary of the Ptuj epidemic. It was his descriptions of the disease that led to the research question of what kind of infectious disease it really was and what its symptoms were, and to the hypothesis that in this case, perhaps, it was not the (bubonic) plague as recorded by older historiography.

In order to verify this hypothesis, it was necessary to study Hauptmanič's original manuscript. The author of the article was kindly and directly referred to it by the ZAP archivists. At that time, a Notice on free access to digitized items in the fonds SI_ZAP/0070 Manuscript collection was also displayed on the ZAP website, with the note that "as part of wider accessibility to archival material kept in the Historical Archives in Ptuj, the entire digitized set of archival material from the fonds SI_ZAP/0070 Manuscript Collection has been added to our Virtual Reading Room for free publication" (Obvestilo o prostem dostopu..., 2022), which was wonderful news. This fortunate circumstance created the possibility to freely access and search the relevant digitized material⁴ in the Virtual Archival Reading room (hereinafter: VAČ).

¹ Namely, following the sources and relevant Slovenian historiography, Croatian historians concluded that the then epidemic wave spread across Hrvatsko Zagorje from Slovenian lands, i.e. from the area of Ptuj via Ormož towards Varaždin, and that it was brought to the Zagreb area by the Franciscans who arrived in the summer of 1682. They found themselves in the Varaždin area and returned to their monastery in Zagreb's Kaptol through the villages of Zagorje.

² The Apolog can be found on pages 42-45.

³ Older signature: PE: R-35.

⁴ Digitized material is "material in physical form that has gone through the digitization process. (...) The product of digitization is "digitalizat", "digital copies" or "digital content" (Semlič Rajh, 2017).

VAC is presented on its website: "VAC is the result of several years of work by the Slovenian Public Archival Service (SJAS) within the project of establishing the Slovenian Electronic Archives. In addition to the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, six regional archives also participated in it. (...) The novelty and extraordinary achievement of VAC lies in the technologies that work in the background and that enable readability, comprehensibility and access to archival material even for vulnerable groups. (...) VAC replaces the search engines scopeQuery and SIRAnet and, by merging the databases of the state and regional archives, upgrades them for a more efficient user experience." (O Vač, 2020).

2. Digitized sources in VAC

Hauptmanič's manuscript in ZAP was digitized in accordance with the requirements of the archival profession, and thus of the e-ARH.si system, which is "safe, standardized and trustworthy Slovenian Electronic Archives for long-term preservation and further use of electronic archival material (Uvajanje informacijske tehnologije, 2020) so that the remote user is provided with a complete overview and detailed insight into the content of Apolog via high-resolution digital files in pdf format⁵. From the associated metadata we learn that "the manuscript comes from the manuscript collection of the former Museum Society in Ptuj" and that it is identified in ZAP as: "Jurij Hauptmanič: Ptuj Chronicle" with original title *Chronicon seu commentarius historicus Pettouiensis. Was sich vmb vnd in Pettau zuegetragen von 10. saeculis oder ain taußent jahren.* (SI_ZAP/0070_00035 Jurij Hauptmanič).⁶ We also learn that along with the manuscript, the documents that place Hauptmanič in the church of St. Martin in Zgornja Hajdina and which indirectly confirms not only the dating of the manuscript around 1691, but also the authorship of Jurij Hauptmanič, because on them we find his stamp and signature as pastor (*Georgius Hauptmanitsch, vicarius*) in 1691⁷, which is enough to conclude that the mentioned manuscript is an authentic document, although it is reasonable to assume that it is not Hauptmanich's autograph. Namely, the corresponding digital copies show that the Chronicle was written in cursive gothic, and the Apologus in cursive humanistic, and it is noted that they were written by at least two scribes.

While searching through VAC we are also informed that in addition to Hauptmanich's original manuscript, ZAP also keeps its transcription, which was most likely compiled by the Ptuj historian Eduard Damisch in 1855. Damisch's transcription also comes from the manuscript collection of the former Museum Society in Ptuj, and it is stored in ZAP as part of the Manuscript Collection under the label SI_ZAP/0070_00078 and under the title: "Jurij Hauptmanič: Ptuj Chronicle cca. 1690, cca.1855" (SI_ZAP/0070_00078 Jurij Hauptmanič). It is compiled of about 26 handwritten pages bound in a book under the original title *Auszug Einer Chronick, die löblich kaiser königl. kammerstadt Pettau betreffend vom herrn Georg Hauptmann.* We read the Apolog on pages 25 and 26 of the book. We notice that the Chronicle was transcribed in very neat and legible cursive gothic, and the Apolog in cursive humanistic, most likely by the hand of only one copyist, that is, Damisch.⁸

⁵ File available at: <https://vac.sjas.gov.si/vac/search/file?uodid=1076100&id=264751>.

⁶ On page 41 of the Chronicle, Hauptmanič calls the Chronicle *Commentarii Historici* while the Apolog calls *Pöema oder Epicinium*.

⁷ Annex 1: "The certified testimony of Gašper Vremec (Vremez) and Tomaž Roglovič (Roglouitsch), from Hajdina, that from the fields of the so-called Renklo dvor, lying on the Dravsko polje and owned by the Ptuj city judge Mihael Math, the grain tithe has always been fully gave to the church of St. Martin in Zgornja Hajdina, dated February 5, 1691." Also: Attestation dated February 5, 1691.

⁸ File available at: <https://vac.sjas.gov.si/vac/search/file?uodid=2137208&id=265022>.

Since Damisch's transcription was also digitized in ZAP, the corresponding digital files in VAČ are publicly available and enable comparison and observation of content and stylistic differences between the original from 1691 and Damisch's transcription from 1855.

3. Secondary sources in Digital Library of Slovenia

Describing Hauptmanič, SBL also refers us to the published printed transcripts (and translations) of his Apolog, which were among the first to be published by the Ptuj priest Matej Slekovec in 1889: "Diocese and Archpriest in Ptuj: a brief history." (Slekovec, 1889), and 1898: "Spiritual sons of the famous Archpriest of Konjiška: biographical stories." (Slekovec, 1898).⁹ On this occasion, SBL also indicates that the first part of the Ptuj Chronicle, "Chronicon, which contains a description of the history of Ptuj", as "extensive but uncritical", remained unpublished (Hauptmanič, Jurij, SBL).

The aforementioned works by Slekovec were digitized in 2011 as part of the Digital Library of Slovenia (hereinafter: DKS)¹⁰. In the section About us, this is how DKS is presented: "The Digital Library of Slovenia (dLib.si) provides access to a variety of digital content from the fields of science, art and culture. It is an online information resource that is an essential component of the modern infrastructure necessary for educational and scientific research processes, and one of the foundations of the information society. In addition, the dLib.si portal enables the permanent preservation of Slovenian written cultural heritage in digital form, which ensures that it will remain accessible to future generations." (O nas, 2005) We immediately notice that in DKS digital recordings have a lower resolution. This is understandable when we read the description of the project, where it is stated that DKS primarily "provides access" and is an "online information resource" for contents in the field of science, art and culture". The DKS project's aim is the "permanent preservation of Slovenian written cultural heritage in digital form", but archival standards were not emphasized as a project priority: "The content published on the portal can meet a wide range of needs, ranging from study, research and instruction to presentation activities, creation and entertainment." However, since it is a strong information infrastructure that exists in parallel with the Slovenian electronic archives, which contains data on numerous additional sources for the original material found in the Slovenian archives, the contents found in the DKS fonds could be viewed by archivists as a huge corpus of information they need to be able to fully realize their task as versatile information experts, and to be able to complete their descriptions of archival fonds and collections and refer historians to links in DKS (and other data collections). All the more because Strategic directions of the Digital Library of Slovenia imply and "the inclusion of related organizations - public institutions in the fields of culture, science and education - and users in the process of developing models for the capture, long-term preservation and access to cultural and scientific heritage in digital form" (O nas, 2005).

⁹ *The content of the Apolog is identical in both printed editions.*

¹⁰ Available on: <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-NGE0MEPT> and <http://www.dlib.si/?URN=URN:NBN:SI:DOC-6N1VLWVS>.

4. Comparative analysis of digital content

The mentioned digital content in the E-archives as well as related content in the DKS allow a comparison of digital copies of the original manuscript from 1691 and its transcript from 1855 (Damisch) and published in print in 1889 (Slekovec, 1889) with the control transcript from 2021¹¹.

Since manuscript transcriptions and their publication belong to the field of egdotic discipline, in this case also historical egdotic, comparative egdotic analysis yielded more results.

For Hauptmanič, who was not only a priest and teacher of the Latin language, but also a writer in the Latin language, as we learn from his mentioned SBL short biography, we can justifiably assume that he knew and followed all the rules of Latin grammar and Latinity of his time. This assumption is supported by fragments from the original manuscript of the Apolog in ZAP (Picture 1), where we see that the manuscript from 1691 mostly follows the way of writing early modern Latin, still keeping -u before -v, -i before a vowel, *i longa*, these abbreviations for -tur and -que, which all later transcribers resolve. From the example, we can see that the mentioned manuscript in ZAP is not Hauptmanič's autograph, all the more so because the scribes also made some small mistakes that Hauptmanič certainly did not notice or correct, e.g. "minimum (...) partem" in verse 6, "imo (...) positi baculisque" in verse 12, and somewhere else. It is interesting that in his transcription Damisch uses the archaic abbreviation for -rr, which Hauptmanič does not have (1st verse), as well as that "Christus" is written without the voice "h" (verse 16).

verz	Damisch (1855)	Hauptmanič (1691)	Slekovec (1889)	Molnar (2021)
1	okrajšava za "-rr-"		decurrit	decurrit
1		"u" mesto "v"	Dravus,	Dravus
2		i longa	Pettovii	Pettovii
2			rorans "rorans" mesto "rigans"	rigans
4		okrajšava za "-tur"	sequuntur,	sequuntur
5		okrajšava za "-que"	oraeque	oraeque
14	"j" mesto "i" pred samoglasnikom		inject s	iniecitis
16	manjka "h"		Christi	Christi

Picture 1: Manuscript fragments from verses 1-16

¹¹ Published by Sikirić Assouline Z. and Molnar, B. in 2021. DOI: 10.17234/RadoviZHP.53.12.

What is really surprising is the transliteration change by Slekovec in the 2nd verse where he uses the synonym "rorans" instead of the original word "rigans", which points to the question: which manuscript did Slekovac use as the basis for his transcription of the Apolog? We have to ask the same question when we read Damisch's transcript. Namely, the numerous examples below (Picture 2) show a lot of Damisch's variations in relation to the older manuscript. Even if we assume that rashness, inattention, *lapsus calami* or poor vision of the scribe is the cause of some minor differences or errors (as "Babtismate" in verse 17, "minis" and "luit" in verse 21, "mandunt" in verse 25, obvious nonsense "vi aut" in verse 29, "inclamant" in verse 38),¹² we see that Damisch (as well as Slekovec) corrects the oldest manuscript of Apolog in some places: "invento" instead "inverto" (in verse 32), "papillas" instead "pupillos" (in verse 37).

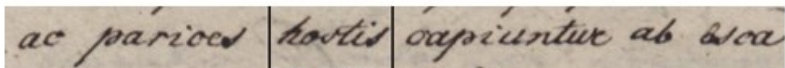
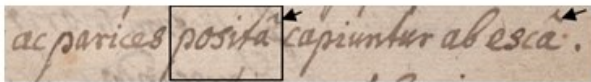
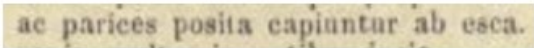
verz	Damitsch (1855)	Hauptmarič (1691)	Slekovec (1889)	Molnar (2021)
17	 "b" mesto "p"			baptismate
21	 "minis" mesto "nimis"			nimis
21	 "luit" mesto "licet"			licet
25	 "mandunt" mesto "mandant"			mandant
28	 "atra dies" mesto "atra lues"			atra lues
29	 "vi aut" mesto "hians"	 "hiant" mesto "hians"		hians
32		 "inverto" mesto "invento"		vix invento
37	 "papillas" mesto "pupillos"			pupillos
38	 "inclamant" mesto "inclamans"			inclamans
50				Nosque

Picture 2: Manuscript fragments from verses 17-50

¹² So: "monstrentur" instead "monstretur" in verse 11, "quod" instead "quot" in verse 15, "quaerunt gementque" instead "quaerens gemensque" in verse 38, "aura" instead "cura" in verse 50.

But what is somewhat unexpected but significant here is Damisch's alteration of the original Hauptmanič's phrase "atra lues", black sickness, to "atra dies", black day (verse 28). The question certainly arises, why did the historian from Ptuj do that? Has the awareness of the severe epidemic recorded by historians already disappeared from the collective memory of the local population in the middle of the 19th century, or has it been replaced by the awareness that this epidemic was not even close to the black death, as the plague was then called?

This alteration by Damisch stands out more than the change of the original phrase "per orbem" to "per urbem" in verse 8, in which Slekovec follows him, or the unexpected replacement of the original word "posita" with the word "hostis" in verse 26 (Picture 3.)

verz 26	
Damitsch (1855)	 "hostis" mesto "posita"
Hauptmanič (1691)	
Slekovec (1889)	
Molnar (2021)	ac parices posita capiuntur ab esca

Picture 3: Manuscript fragments from verse 26

Damisch even managed to inadvertently drop the word "teneat" in verse 40, and change the order of verses 51 and 52, where he again uses the phrase "ex urbe" instead of "ex orbe".

5. Conclusion

If we take into account all observed morphological-syntactic differences, we see that Apolog was still copied and preserved throughout the centuries, and that Hauptmanič's text retained a certain strength and evidential power. Over time, the content of the text of the Apolog remained almost unchanged, except when it came to the characterization of the epidemic itself, i.e. its original name, which, as we have seen, disappears in Damisch's transcription, which actually speaks in support of the hypothesis mentioned in the Introduction of this article.

Hauptmanič should also be seen here as a Slovenian Latinist of the 17th century. As a poetic piece, his Apolog may not be a significant achievement for the history of Slovenian Latin literature, on which Slovenian Latinists have yet to give their opinion, but as a historical testimony, it is an extremely rare and therefore valuable narrative source. As a witness, Hauptmanič writes as a priest in the spirit of that time - he condemns human licentiousness and intemperance and calls for prayer, because that was how the plague was "treated" back then.

The Apolog should be evaluated as a relevant source for the history of medicine, for microhistory, for the social and economic history of the early modern age, and for the

history of crisis management, and Hauptmanič should be evaluated as a credible observer of historical events who also made a unique scientific contribution.

Such a comprehensive approach to Apolog, its evaluation as well as the described egdotic analysis, of course, would not be possible without the existence and free access to the Slovenian Electronic Archives which, in addition to containing publicly available high-resolution digitized copies of the originals, acts as a scientific database that enables comparison, control and detailed verification of texts and other materials through consistent identification of materials and carefully selected descriptors. It is clear that behind everything is the professional knowledge and expertise of Slovenian archival experts who support the entire tectonics of the Slovenian Electronic Archives, enable users to (remotely) work on the material and refer them to further research.

Free access to digitized archival sources here proves to be a big step towards further democratization of historical and other sciences.

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POVZETEK

PESEM O STRAŠNI PTUJSKI KUGI ALI KAKO SLOVENSKI ELEKTRONSKI ARHIV POMAGA PRI ZGODOVINSKI RAZISKAVI

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Prispevek opisuje proces preskušanja hipoteze, ki postavlja pod vprašaj nekdanjo opredelitev epidemije na področju Zagreba med letoma 1682 in 1683. Epidemija se je razširila z območja Ptuja preko Varaždina in hrvaškega Zagorja proti Zagrebu, prenašala pa jo je skupina frančiškanskih duhovnikov. Prej omenjena hipoteza v primeru te epidemije zanika prisotnost črne kuge. Postopek preverjanja hipoteze temelji na analizi vsebine pesmi o strašni ptujski kugi (Apologus Carminicus de horrenda contagione Pettoviensi; v nadaljevanju: Apolog), pesmi, ki jo je v latinskem jeziku okoli leta 1691 napisal lokalni duhovnik Jurij Hauptmanič, preživela priča epidemije. Slednja je na Ptuju pustošila v letih 1679–1682. V 53 heksametričnih verzih Hauptmanič ne samo seznanja z ukrepi proti epidemiji, ki so jih uvedli na območju Ptuja, ampak tudi živo opisuje simptome in potek bolezni. Pesem predstavlja edinstveno pričevanje sodobnika epidemije in je tako dragocen pripovedni zgodovinski vir.

Originalen rokopis Apologa iz leta 1691 kot tudi njegovo transkripcijo iz leta 1855, ki jo je napravil zgodovinar Eduard Damisch, hrani Zgodovinski arhiv na Ptuju. Ti rokopisi so bili v letu 2009 digitalizirani v visoki resoluciji in so preko Virtualne arhivske čitalnice prosto dostopni v formatu PDF, skupaj z metapodatki in ključnimi besedami. Visoka kvaliteta digitalne kopije ponuja natančen vpogled v vsebino, morfologijo in zapis Apologa iz leta 1691 ter njegove transkripcije iz leta 1855, kar omogoča primerjalno analizo.

Ptujski duhovnik Matej Slekovec je objavil tiskano izdajo Apologa v njegovi zgodovinski monografiji leta 1889. Knjiga je bila digitizirana v letu 2011 in se hrani v podatkovni bazi Digitalne knjižnice Slovenije, prav tako v prostem dostopu. Tako je bilo mogoče Slekovčevo izdajo Apologa vključiti v primerjalno analizo.

Analiza je pokazala, da rokopis iz leta 1691 verjetno ni Hauptmaničev lasten, vendar je vsekakor nastal v njegovi prisotnosti in v času njegovega življenja. Med rokopisom iz leta 1691, transkripcijo iz leta 1855 in tiskano izdajo leta 1889 je veliko morfološko-sintaktičnih sprememb, najpomembnejša se zdi sprememba Hauptmaničeve izvirne sintagme »atra lues«, tj. črna bolezen (vetz 28), v »atra dies«, kar pomeni črni dan, v transkripciji iz leta 1855. To morda kaže na to, da je sredi 19. stoletja zavest o hudi epidemiji že izginila iz kolektivnega spomina tam živeče populacije ali pa jo je nadomestilo stališče, da obravnavana epidemija ni bila niti blizu črni smrti, kakor se je kuga takrat imenovala. Oba zaključka podpirata hipotezo iz začetka prispevka, Hauptmanič pa se je predstavil kot zanesljiv in avtentičen vir tistega časa.

Opisani primer dobre prakse kaže, da Slovenski elektronski arhiv z omogočanjem prostega dostopa do visoko kvalitetnih vsebin v digitalni obliki, opremljenih z metapodatki, in njihovo organiziranostjo v skladu s tektoniko arhiva ponuja številne možnosti za raziskovanje gradiva in omogoča oddaljeni dostop. Zelo pomembna, verjetno najpomembnejša, pa je vloga slovenskih arhivistov, ki s strokovnim znanjem in priporočili usmerjajo zgodovinarje ter jim pomagajo razumeti kontekst nastanka gradiva, kar prispeva k boljšemu prepoznavanju in bolj zanesljivi interpretaciji zgodovinskih virov. Vse to pa odpira nove možnosti in daje znanstvenim raziskavam novo kvaliteto.