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Urbanonymy of medieval Olomouc: selected problems

Abstract. The study deals with the set of medieval urbanonyms (street and square names) acquired from the oldest city books and from the legal documents, especially deeds, written in the 14th and 15th century. The author offers some new explanations of urbanonyms that seem to be clear, but their motivation is not in accordance with the natural state of named places (e.g. *in foro superiori* 'in the Upper Square', *in foro inferiori* 'in the Lower Square', *in Vorloregassen* 'in the Lost Street'). The author presents also some arguments for German (non-Slavic) origin of the name *Olomouc*. **Keywords:** toponomastics; urbanonymy; Olomouc; street names; the Middle Ages; German-Slavic language contact; Latin.

Olomouc is a historical city in Moravia, located in the eastern part of the Czech Republic. Not later than since the second half of the 9th century, when the Great Moravian Empire was thriving, Olomouc was verifiable the centre of trade, religion and administration (Kalábková-Kalábek 2009: 80). And not long after the fall of the Great Moravian Empire at the beginning of 10th century, Olomouc became the seat of the subsidiary Přemyslid government and in 1063 the bishopric of Olomouc was restored (Bistřický 2009: 91). The royal city was founded on Magdeburg rights approximately between 1239 and 1246 (first vogt was mentioned in 1254; Bistřický 2009: 105, Kohout 2009: 145) and in a short time Olomouc became the renowned centre of long-distance trade (main trading partners were the merchants from Wrocław, Kraków, Prague and Vienna) and also the centre of craft and religious culture (Kohout 2009: 161).

The area of the medieval city of Olomouc was about 87 hectares. The estimated number of houses was 800 at that time and the number of inhabitants related to the number of houses is estimated between 3 500 to 5 400 (Kaňák 2009: 199). Till the end of the 14th century the German names prevail among the references to the inhabitants of Olomouc, but ethnicity of the people might be in more complicated relations with origin of their names. However, the predominantly Czech character of the suburbs of Olomouc (*Bělidla*, *Lazce*, *Ostrový*, *Koželužská ulice* and some others) is evident, just as the gradual bohémisation of the inhabitants in Olomouc, patricians included. The position of the Czech language in Olomouc strengthened as a result of big plagues (1357–1363, 1380), Hussite wars (1419–1434; rather in a smaller way) and the rise of prestige of the Czech ethnicity and language in the Czech Kingdom in the second half of the 15th century (Kohout 2009: 141).

The administrative texts were written in Latin till the end of 14th century (Kohout 2009: 149). This caused the regular latinisation of common German

and Czech urbanonyms (names of squares and their parts, streets, city gates etc.). Main sources used in our research were *Liber actuum notabilium* (the oldest city book from 1343–1420, further LAN; ed. Spáčil 1982), *Liber civitatis* by Václav of Jihlava (from 1430–1492, further LC; ed. Spáčilová – Spáčil 2004) and collection of deeds deposited in the Municipal Archive Olomouc (in *Zemský archiv Opava*) that contains i.a. the oldest account of an urbanonyme in Olomouc, in *platea dicta Zebraczká* from 1343 (the deeds, further D, we quote using their inventory number in the archive).

We have assembled (in total) 76 urbanonyms from texts written between 1343 and 1500. This collection showed that the nature of names was non-binding and the overlaps, confusions and variants of urbanonyms were rather common, e.g. *Voglmarch* ‘Bird Market’ in text from 1437 (LC49vb)¹ was probably a part of *Niederring* ‘Lower Square’, such as *Fischmarkt* ‘Fish Market’ (1455, LC129ra). Most of the names have a simple motivation: they primarily reflect the concentration of certain crafts (1358 in *Ramhof* ‘Frame Courtyard’, LAN19r, with reference to the cloth weavers and their frames; 1367 in *plathea calcariatorum* ‘Spur Maker Street’, LAN26r; 1375 ex *platea Puczensgassil* ‘Barber Street’, LAN10r; 1382 in *platea pistorum* ‘Baker Street’, LAN14v; 1384 de *Cammergas* ‘Comb Maker Street’, LAN30r) or concentration of some ethnic or other specified group of inhabitants (1417 in *Boemicali plathea* ‘Czech Street’, LC46ra; 1403 in *plathea Judeorum* ‘Jewish Street’, LC156vb; 1434 in *der Nunnengassen* ‘Beguin Street’, LC250rb, with reference to the certain lay religious order) or travel directions (1369 in *plathea Luthasi*, correctly: *Luthouiensi* ‘Litovel Street’, LAN8v, with reference to the town located 18 km to the north-west of Olomouc).

The motivation of some urbanonyms in Olomouc seems to be clear, but there are some doubts in more detailed view. E.g. names of two main squares in Olomouc, ‘Upper Square’ (variants: 1363 in *foro superiori*, LAN23r; 1419 in *Superiori circulo*, LC216ra; 1420 in *circulo Superiori*, LC246va; 1440 am *Oberen ring* LC274rb; 1443 an *den rink*, LC274vb; 1447 am *ringe*, LC223vb; 1452 off *dem Oberen ringe*, LC151vb; 1453 am *ringe*, LC188va; 1455 am *Obristen ringe*, LC187vb; 1456 an *dem ringe*, LC190va; 1482 am *ring*, LC199ra) and ‘Lower Square’ (variants: 1362 in *foro inferiori*, LAN21r; 1430 in *Inferiori circulo*, LC248vb; 1436 uff *dem Nidermark*, LC119ra; 1449 off *dem Nidermarkte*, LC228rb; 1455 auf *dem Nidermargte*, LC128ra; 1455 auf *dem Nidermarkte*, LC189ra; 1455 auf *dem Nidermarkte*, LC234rb; 1457 auf *dem Nidermarkt*, LC131ra) do not correspond with the

1 We quote the sources using the page number of the original text (city books LAN, LC), not the page number in editions. The letter *r* means *reverse* (front side of certain folio in an original text), letter *v* means *verso* (the back side). Letters *a* and *b* refer to the left and to the right column on certain page.

real and visible altitude difference between these two interconnected squares. The 'Upper Square' has altitude (above sea level) from 216 to 221 m, the 'Lower Square' from 215 to 222 m – the observer has even an impression that the 'Lower Square' is located a little bit higher than the second one. It is possible to suppose that recent altitude relation between both squares is similar to the historic state (the ground level of 13th century is 2 m under the recent level all over the both squares). Thus, the distinction of 'Upper' and 'Lower' follows probably something else: the location of both squares in view of the flowing direction of a distributary channel of Morava river. This distributary channel flowed around Olomouc on the western side since beginnings of the city till 1950s when the channel was covered. The card files with excerpts for *Slovník staročeský* (Dictionary of Old Czech) contain a whole range of accounts of using the adjectives *horní* 'upper' and *dolní* 'lower' in this meaning. E.g. common and proper names *dolní konec vsi* 'lower end of the village', *dolní dvůr* 'lower courtyard', *dolní soused* 'lower neighbor', *Dolní rybník* (the name of certain 'lower' pond), *Dolní Bojanovice* (village in the South Moravia) refer to the places that are located down stream.²

The name 'Lost Street' (recent *Ztracená Street*, variants: 1354 *in vico Florenzgazz*, LAN3v; 1391 *in plathea Vorloren jass* [sic!], LAN32v; 1430 *in Vorlorengassen*, LC249ra; 1439 *in der Vorlarengassen*, LC52vb; 1452 *in die Vorlornegasse*, LC231va; 1453 *in der Vorlorngassen*, LC187va) refers to the street that is not 'lost' or 'peripheral' in no sense (and was not in the Middle Ages). The 'Lost Street' in Olomouc was a busy street in the city centre, where the relatively rich inhabitants lived. Etymology grounded on the account *in vico Florenzgazz* (from 1354), i.e. 'village where merchants from Florence lived' is less probable because there is no evidence of some continuous occurrence of Florence merchants in Olomouc. Motivation of this urbanonym is probably connected with the building of block of houses between recent *Ostružnická Street* and 'Lost Street' in the 14th century. This street might be metaphorically called 'lost' because it became 'invisible' being observed from the entrance of the Olomouc city hall (for more see Bláha 2005).

It is very interesting to consider that the first account of any urbanonym in medieval Olomouc, city settled predominantly by the German inhabitants, is the Czech name *Žebračka* 'the place where beggars live' (1343 *in platea dicta Zebraczka*, D71; 1415 *in Zebraczka*, LC45vb). This name, that occurs always in the Czech variant only, may refer to the mendicant religious order of Dominicans because the street was probably located in front of Dominican monastery

2 The author thanks Dr. Petr Nejedlý (Prague) for the information about meaning of *dolní* 'lower' and *horní* 'upper' in Older Czech.

(founded 1227) on the top of the mountain in the city centre, in close proximity of 'Jewish Street'. The *Žebračka* might as well refer simply to the 'beggars', 'poor people' (this explanation can be based on provable poverty of local inhabitants, especially when compared with the inhabitants of near 'Lost Street').

Also the names of certain suburbs of medieval Olomouc are not clear, e.g. *Wagendruessel* (1451, LC231rb) located about 0,5 km to the west of the city where the recent street *Na Vozovce* (literally: 'On-the-road-way Street') is. The first component of the name is evident (*Wagen* 'wagon') and the second can be connected with the Middle High German *drüssel* 'throat', 'maw' (Spáčilová – Spáčil – Bok 2014: 189). When we consider the fact that the street (and former suburb) is located on the foothills of *Tabulový vrch* (in German: *Tafelberg*) where occasional little watercourses and puddles occurred and when we allow for the fact that one of the roads to the city gates of Olomouc went through this location, *Wagendruessel* might be a warning name ('place where the wagon can get stuck'). There are also some parallels of this name in the German-Slavic contact zone, i.e. in the Western Bohemia (*Wagendrüssel* as suburb of the city Brüx/Most), then the castle near Prudnik in Upper Silesia (*Wogendrossel*), *Wogindrossil* near Zittau in the Upper Silesia, the village in the Spiš area in today's north-eastern Slovakia (*Vogendrisel*, *Vogendriszel*, *Wagendrisel*, *Wogendisln*, since 1948: *Nálepko*) etc.

Probably the biggest etymological problem that we can mention here is the name *Olomouc* itself. First attempted in Kosmas' *Chronica Bohemorum* from the beginning of the 12th century, the name *Olomouc* is etymologically unclear and it inspired up to now about twenty different explanations. An attempt to connect this name with Gaius Iulius Caesar (*Olomouc* < *Olomutium* < **Iuliomontium*) belongs among the well-known etymologies. However, this etymology is not supported by the historical facts, as well as the most common etymology that explains the name *Olomouc* as a possessive adjective derived from personal name **Olomqt* or **Olomút* (**Olomút-jь* 'Olomút's (castle, courtyard etc.)' > *Olomúc* > *Olomouc*). This etymology is correct from the point of view of historical linguistics, but collapses because of non-existence of the name **Olomqt* or **Olomút* in written texts (see an outline of etymologies of the name *Olomouc* in Bláha 2002; cf. Paliga 2006: 323, where another etymologies are introduced).

In our opinion, the most probable etymology of the name *Olomouc* could be the explanation that was once rejected as a product of German nationalism: the city is located in the Moravia's oldest settlement area where the interethnic (German-Slavic) contact can be supposed since a long time ago. Thus, the name *Olomouc* could be really a continuant of an old German possessive genitive **Alamund-es* 'Alamund's (castle, courtyard etc.)' as German slavists E. Schwarz

(1923: 80, cf. Schwarz 1931: 44) and M. Vasmer (1925: 528) believed. In that case the historical development of the name would be absolutely regular (*Alamund-es > *Olomunc in Slavic interpretation > *Olomȋc > Olomúc > Olomouc). Unlike the etymology based on the personal name *Olomút*, the name *Alamund* is well documented in the texts and, moreover, it is possible to support this etymology using the Polish variant of the name: *Ołmuniec*. If the name *Olomouc* was pure Slavic name, the Polish language, still having nasal vowels, would reflect the name as **Ołomȋc* (<**Olomȋc*) rather than *Ołmuniec*. The Polish form (with not accomplished nasalisation) probably shows that the name was felt as foreign (non-Slavic).

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Urbanonymie středověké Olomouce: vybrané problémy. Příspěvek se zabývá několika etymologicky ne zcela jasnými urbanonymy ze středověké Olomouce a vykládá je s přihlédnutím ke specifickým místním geografické a sociální situace. Jméno olomouckého *Horního náměstí* a *Dolního náměstí* autor s přihlédnutím k faktu, že skutečný výškopisný charakter obou náměstí nápadně nekoresponduje (a ani ve středověku nekorespondoval) s jejich pojmenováním, vykládá se zřetelem ke směru toku ramena Moravy, které obě náměstí až do 50. let 20. století obtékalo: *Horní náměstí* bylo výše proti proudu než *Dolní náměstí*. Jméno *Ztracená ulice*, které odedávna označovalo (překvapivě) jednu z hlavních a nejbohatších

olomouckých ulic, autor spojuje se stavbou domovního bloku, který už v rané fázi budování města prokazatelně omezil šířku této ulice a který poněkud zakryl pohled na její vyústění do náměstí (tj. ulice se „ztratila“). Jméno olomouckého předměstí *Wagendriüßel* autor na základě analogií odjinud pokládá za „varovné“: v těchto místech, která přiléhají k hlavní cestě z Olomouce na západ do Čech (jež vede po úpatí Tabulového vrchu) se i dnes po deštích či po jarním tání vytvářejí rozsáhlé louže, které mohly v minulosti způsobit uvíznutí vozu (jméno se skládá z komponentů *Wagen*- ‘vůz’ a *-drüßel* ‘hrdlo’, ‘chřtán’, ‘něco, co pohlcuje’). Dále autor upozorňuje na to, že nejstarší doložené urbanonymum vůbec (*Žebračka*) mělo po celou dobu svého výskytu, byť byla Olomouc převážně německojazyčným městem, pouze českou podobu a je v tomto smyslu výmluvnou výjimkou. Na závěr autor nabízí výklad jména Olomouc z germánského posesivního genitivu **Alamundes* ‘Alamundův (hrad, dvůr atd.)’ > **Olomunc* > **Olomȳc* > *Olomůc* > *Olomouc* s odkazem na polskou podobu jména (*Ołomuniec*), která nereflektuje slovanskou nosovku, a tedy zřejmě nepřímo dokládá, že jméno města mohlo být pocítováno jako cizí.

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