

Inscriptional Culture in Pentapolitana Cities in the Early Modern Period*

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vol. 14, 2025, no. 1, pp. 33–47

<https://doi.org/10.33542/CAH2025-1-02>



This study examines the inscriptional culture of the cities of the Pentapolitana in the Early Modern period. The cultural development of these five free royal towns was also reflected in the epigraphic sphere. The strong influence of Humanism, the Renaissance, and the Protestant Reformation is evident from an early stage. One notable example is the depiction of Martin Luther accompanied by text in Levoča Town Hall as early as the mid-sixteenth century. The bourgeois character of inscriptional culture is logically reflected in the urban patriciate's desire to assert its independence – including through the medium of inscriptions. This is exemplified by the inscriptions on Levoča Town Hall from the early seventeenth century. Throughout the Early Modern period, the dominant form of epigraphic expression was the sepulchral monument, which provides a wealth of prosopographical data. These monuments often include quotations from the Bible which are of particular value for ecclesiastical and theological research. In addition, they serve as sources of valuable literary works, mostly in the form of epicedia.

Keywords: Pentapolitana; inscriptions; sepulchral monuments; Early Modern period; graffiti.

During the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century, the territory of today's eastern Slovakia underwent dynamic political, social and religious development. Needless to say, it was the local towns that played a key role in this process. Five towns – Košice, Prešov, Levoča, Bardejov and Sabinov, known collectively as Pentapolitana – represented an important grouping that was strongly active in social, cultural and religious matters. This was supported by regular meetings of political or religious representatives, as well as intensive communication within the Pentapolitana and with the outside world.

The rapid development in education and the groundbreaking religious reforms in the first half of the sixteenth century were crucial for the development of inscriptional culture. Together with the new artistic style of the Renaissance, humanism and the Reformation were key attributes that shaped the inscriptional culture of the Pentapolitana in terms of both quantity and quality. The high quality of the local city schools was crucial in raising the educational level of the population of these cities. Their leaders, whether they were the rectors themselves or other types of teacher (auditor, cantor, collaborator), were typically scholars who had returned to Hungary from high-quality German universities or exiles from the territory of Bohemia and Moravia. The burghers were much more in the position of recipients, commissioners or ideological creators of epigraphs precisely due to increasing number and quality of educated members of the bourgeoisie.

* This work was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under the Contract no. APVV-23-0398.

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It is not possible to identify a specific inscriptional culture that would have been typical for this particular urban grouping. Nevertheless, the inscriptional culture of the Pentapolitana towns was presented externally in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century with considerably greater intensity than in the Middle Ages, and in a much more flamboyant and varied manner, heavily infiltrated by secular elements. This was a consequence of the laicization of society, which, in line with humanistic traditions, found inspiration from antiquity in the epigraphic space. The secularity of the texts is also reflected in their factuality and informational value. We learn from them about devastating catastrophes, such as fires or plague epidemics. The sepulchral monuments contain a wealth of prosopographical data that contributes to the knowledge of the history of individual noble or burgher families. One special category is the increasing number of graffiti inscriptions, which deserve attention both because of the personalities who chose to preserve their memory in this way and due to the original content, which is often surprising in its message and is not limited to names and dates. Throughout the period under study, sepulchral remains have proven to be of the greatest value. They are very varied in form and content, as discussed later, but the Christian worldview dominates inscriptional culture in terms of ideas.

The Sixteenth Century

The late Middle Ages coincides with the beginning of the sixteenth century in the territory under discussion, including the cities of Pentapolitana. The new trends from the turn of the century are probably most evident in the epigraphic decoration of the town hall in Bardejov, which is not far behind its models in Italian, German or Silesian towns. The monumentality of the inscriptions that appear in the most exposed places of the Renaissance renaissance oriel and portal is complemented by the content of the texts, which are inspired by biblical or classical texts. Above all, they express the ideal of responsible and just urban governance.¹

In the early sixteenth century, the ideas of Luther's Reformation took hold in the Pentapolitana towns. One of the earliest pieces of evidence is the depiction of Luther himself on the ground floor of Levoča Town Hall. It was created just after a fire in 1550. A recent discovery in the lining of the window was accompanied by a fragment of an inscription, which we have been able to reconstruct as follows: MARTINVS [LV]THER. IS[LEBIVS] / [- - -]. The identification of Martin Luther was also aided by the three letters BIB which accompany the depiction. This is the designation of the bible ("BIBEL") with which Luther is traditionally depicted. The painting is complemented on the opposite wall by a coat of arms of the town of Levoča with the letters CL, i.e. Civitas Leutschovia.

Some very interesting and slightly older texts were found in close proximity to the portrait of Martin Luther representing the worldview and beliefs of the people of Levoča in this period, dating from the first third of the sixteenth century. Their content and form (written in modern capital letters) confirm that the building was altered as part of its adaptation to the function of a town hall. The first text comes from the Old Testament book of Isaiah, 11: 3–4, reconstructed as follows:

1 ČOVAN, *Historické nápisy zo Šariša*, 94–95.

CAP(VT) · XI · / [ET REPLEBIT EVM SPIRITVS TIMORIS DOMINI NON SECV]
NDVM VISIONE(M) OCV= / [LORVM IVDICABI]T NEQ[V]E [S]ECV[ND]VM
AV / [DITVM AVRIVM] ARGVET SE[D] IVDICABIT / [IN IVSTITIA P]AVPERES
ET ARGV[ET] I(N) EQ=/ [VITATE PRO MANSVET]IS TERRE , ET PERCV=/
[TIET TERRAM VIR]GA ORIS [SVI ET] SPIR[ITV] / [LABIORVM SVORVM]
INTERFICIET IMPIV(M) // [- -]E · I · CAP(VT).²

The second text we have been able to identify also comes from the book of Isaiah, 5: 11–12 and 21–23:

[VAE QVI CONSVRGITIS MANE ADEBRIETATEM SECTANDAM ET / POTANDVM
VSQVE AD V]ESPERA(M) V[T VINO AESTVETIS CITHA] / RA ET L[YRA ET
TYMPA]NV(M) [ET] TIBIA [ET VINVM IN CONVIVIIS VESTRIS] / ET O[PVS
DOMINI NON R]ESPICITIS · NEC OPE[RA MANVVM EIVS CONSIDERATIS] /
[I]SAIAS [- - - VAE QVI] SAPIE(N)TES ESTIS IN OCV[LIS VESTRIS ET CORAM
/ VOBISM]ETI[PSIS PRV]DE(N)TES QV[I POTENTES ESTIS AD BIBENDVM
VINVM ET VIRI FORTES AD MISCENDAM EMBRIETATEM QVI IVSTIFICATIS
IMPIVM PRO MVNERIBVS] / ET IV[STITIAM IVSTI] AV[FERTIS] AB[EO] / [- - -].³

These texts were not chosen for the space of the town hall by chance. The epigraphs, primarily of a spiritual nature, are both an admonition and a call for good, responsible and just governance and decision-making.⁴

The town of Sabinov also had a direct connection with Martin Luther. According to older sources, Ján Praedicator, who came from the Upper Lusatian town of Zittau, became the first Protestant pastor in the town at his direct intercession. He worked in Wittenberg as an Augustinian monk. After Luther's appearance in 1517, he joined his teachings. An epitaph from 1533 informs us of his presence in Sabinov:⁵

Hac Janus habet requiem Praedicator in Vrna / Jam pridem Cathedrae,
pars veneranda Sacrae / Primo Cruciburgi docuit Sacra dogmata Summi /
Fortiter et rexit, per breve tembus oves / hidea Virum pietas et Olympia
verba docendi / Dexteritas alium iussit habere locum / Nempe Cibinium
cui sic placuisset repertus / Ipsi ut Templorum, Sceptra Suprema daret
/ Praefuit hic Septem cunctis Venerabilis Annos / Et celebris grata
Simplicitate pater / Extinctum luget Urbs illustrissima Semper / Moenia

2 "Chapter 11. And the fear of the Lord shall fill him. He will not judge by the appearance of his eyes, nor by what he has heard, but in truth he will judge the poor, and will judge righteously in favor of the meek of the earth. And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. ... Chapter 1."

3 "Woe unto you that rise up in the morning, seeking a strong drink, and are in a wine-frenzy until the evening. The zither, the harp, the drum, the flute, and the wine are your feasts. But you do not look at the work of the Lord, and do not notice the works of his hands. Isaiah ... Woe to you who think yourselves wise and prudent before yourselves, who are valiant in drinking wine and in mixing drink. Woe unto you that justify the wicked for gifts, and take away the righteous from the righteous."

4 On the epigraphy of Levoča and Spiš, see: ŠEDIVÝ, *Stredoveká písomná kultúra na Spiši*, 483–543.

5 Transcript by Archive of the Evangelical (Augsburg Confession) Parish in Prešov [Archív ev. a. v. fary v Prešove], WÄCHTER, Daniel. *Status et Fatorum Ecclesiae Evangelicae utriusque Nationis Germanicae atque ac Slavicae in Regia ac Libera Civitate Cibiniensi*, 1778, pp. 84–86.

tota gemunt, cumq̄ dolore gemunt / Corpus habet Templum hoc: Animam
Sibi Sydera servant / Doctorum Superest Nomen in Orbe Viri!.⁶

Paradoxically, the religious tensions in the first half of the sixteenth century may be expressed in a text that no longer exists today: an inscription on a late Gothic chalice in Košice, the text of which contained, in the early sixteenth century, the word MARIA in addition to the name of Jesus. Apparently, in the period after Martin Luther's ascension the name of Maria was removed and only small fragments are visible today. Fortunately, these are sufficient to identify at least some of the letters. The Protestants in Košice would have logically rejected the deification of the Virgin Mary in this way.⁷

The inscriptional culture in Košice, the most important urban centre in Upper Hungary, was highly distinctive. Nevertheless, as with other towns in this period, especially Levoča, sepulchral monuments dominated from the second half of the sixteenth century.⁸ In Košice, however, we can observe an interesting phenomenon. All the sepulchral monuments of this period were for prominent individuals of various nationalities, almost exclusively nobles who came to Košice through their duties, whether in service to the imperial army or to serve in the Spiš Chamber. Košice was also the seat of the Upper Hungarian Captaincy. One of the oldest tombstones is dedicated to the Upper Hungarian Captain Imrich Telekeši, which dates back to 1560. Only part of the text has been preserved:

INSIGNIA MAGNIFI/CI DOMI(NI) EMERICI TELE/KE[SI GENC]IVM [S]
ACRATISSIM(AE) / ROMANOR(VM) CESAREAE REGIAE/Q(VE) [MAIES]TATIS
IN PARTIBVS / REGNI HVNGARIAE [SV]PE/ RIORIB(VS) E[XI]STE(N)CIV(M)
AC CIVI/TATIS CA[SS]OVIE(N)SIS [SV]PREMI / CAPITANEI OBYT AN(N)O
[AE]TATIS / SV[AE] [L]II DIE XXX MAY [MD]LX.⁹

Another individual commemorated in this way is Peter, a member of the Italian Paar family, who came to Košice as part of his military duties. In 1567 he had an epitaph made in the Cathedral of St Elizabeth, which is no longer standing. The text is therefore only known from old written sources.¹⁰ The first part is mainly of prosopographical importance for us:

Martino Baroni de Parre Bergomensi Sac(rae) Caes(arae) Ma(iesta)tis
Magistro Postarum Possonien(s) eiusq(ue) Consorti Lucretiae Sarsonae

6 "In this place John the Preacher found rest. But he once served honorably in the priestly office. First in the city of Kreuzburg he preached the holy dogmas of the Most High, and for a short time bravely led the people there. His love for the people and skill in preaching the word of God led him thence to another place. When he found himself in Sabinov, he so endeared himself to its citizens that they entrusted him with the supreme government of the local church, at the head of which he stood, and with sincerity and simplicity he led, as a venerable and illustrious pastor, for seven whole years. Now the noble city mourns for him, the whole of Sabinov mourns and laments for him with sorrow. The body remains in the temple, but Heaven is no longer mindful of the soul. The names of the learned shall endure on earth!"

7 ČOVAN, *Historické nápisy z územia Košíc*, 32.

8 LUDIKOVÁ – MIKÓ – PÁLFFY, *A löcsei Szent Jakab-templom*, 327–410.

9 "The coat of arms of the noble lord Imrich Telekeši, chief captain of his most holy imperial and royal majesty in Upper Hungary and in the city of Košice. He died at the age of 52, on 30 May 1560."

10 WURMBRAND, *Collectanea Genealogico-Historica*, 330.

et Mauritiæ Scarpæ de Gandino, coniungi suæ charissimæ, Petrus de Parre superstes Magister Postarum Posoniensis, Frater et Coniunx, sibique dicans maestissimus pietatis ergo posuit Anno re(cu)peratæ Salutis MDLXVII Mensis Junii XXIII.¹¹

The second part of the inscription is actually an epitaph in the literary sense:

Hic me percelebri cretum de gente Baronum / Martinum dictum nomine, claudit humus / Conteruit Turcis, pugnacis robora dextra / Nostra(que) Caesareus cura Veredus erat / Ad Christum mecum palmas Lucretia conjunx / Tetendit, Sarsonæ sanguine nata Domus / Quæ fuerat Thalami consors nunc Aecuba vitæ / Est mihi defuncto nos habet una quies / Militia, Officio Fratri Parr stemmate claro / exstiteram; præstans munia digna probis / Integritas vitæ pariter mea Martia Virtus / Nota fuit vulgo Principibusque Viris / In Dominumque fides solers et rebus in ejus / Dexteritas semper conspicienda fuit / Mauritiæ uxorem Scarpea stirpe profectam / Mors injectit tumulo huic imperiosa meo.¹²

The sepulchral monument, although preserved only in secondary form, is an extremely valuable source on an important family from a whole-European perspective. As in many other countries, its members established themselves as postmasters in Hungary. Peter, who had the epitaph made, was the postmaster of Pressburg and the chief postmaster in all of Hungary. It was these duties that brought him to Košice in wartime, where his task was to establish a postal link between Pressburg and Košice and then onwards to Transylvania. It was probably the death of his wife that prompted him to have a monument made, which he also dedicated to his brother Martin and his wife.¹³

The Spiš Chamber had an important role in Košice and in the wider region of Upper Hungary and was thus in intensive communication with the individual towns of the Pentapolitana. Several of its representatives or their family members found their final resting place in Košice, including the Chamber's chief accountant, Juraj Jezernický, whose epitaph is secondarily placed on the exterior of St Michael's Chapel. In addition to prosopographical data, the inscription also informs us about the cause of his death in 1577, during a plague epidemic:

11 "To Baron Martin of the House of Paar of Bergamo, Postmaster of Posonium, His Imperial Majesty, his wife Lucrezia of the House of Sarso, and his dearest wife Maurice Scarpa de Gandino, the surviving and bereaved husband and brother, Postmaster Peter of the House of Paar of Posonium, in the year of the regained Salvation, 1567, June 23, 1567, was given out of love by the surviving and bereaved husband and brother, Postmaster Peter of the House of Paar of Posonium, in the year of the regained Salvation."

12 "Here the earth covers me, Martin, a descendant of a famous family of barons. With the Turks he was plagued, like the imperial Veredus, when he was our strength and true support against a rebellious enemy. To Christ with me clasps the hands my wife Lucretia, descended from the House of Sarso, who was a faithful companion in marriage, now... of life. After death they rest together in peace. I grew up when my brother of the illustrious House of Parr served in the military, rendering worthy service to all the brave. The integrity of his life as well as my military prowess were well known to princes and common men alike. His faith in the Lord was always evident, also that he was ingenious and skillful in his affairs. My wife, Mauritia, descended from the House of Scarpe, has been cast by an imperious death into this grave of mine."

13 Martin himself died in 1553. FEDERMAYER, *Uhorská vetva*, 99.

E[PI]TA[PHIVM DOM(INI)] GEORGY JEZERNICZKY SAC(RAE) / [C]A[ESA(RAE)
MAIES(TATIS)] CAMERAE SCEPVSIS M(A)G(IST)RI RATIONV(M) /
[LATINARVM - - -] 23 7BRIS 77 / [ANNO CHRISTIANO] OBDORMIVIT /
HIC JEZERNICZKY PRAESTANS VIRTUTE GEORGIVS / EXTINCTVS PESTE
[FVIT] VEHEMENTE IACET / DIVIS CAESARIBVS PRIMIS SERVIVIT AB ANNIS
/ ASSIDVO STDIO MORTIS ADVSQVE DIEM / LAVS EST CAESARIBVS
SERVIRE POTENTIBVS INGE(N)S / AT SERVIRE DEO GLORIA MAIOR ERIT.¹⁴

The tombstone of the captain of Šariš Castle, Konrad Kappler, dated 1558, which is secondarily placed on the exterior of the Church of the Beheading of St John the Baptist, represents to the same type of sepulchral sculpture.¹⁵ In this case, too, it commemorates a nobleman who, as a supporter of Ferdinand I, joined the military campaign against the Ottoman threat. Conrad came from Tyrol, as reflected in the epigraphic dimension of the sepulchral monument itself. Paleographically, this is one of the earliest discoveries of Fraktur (German gothic minuscule) in the cities of Pentapolitana. This type of writing is often encountered in the Šariš region, where it is almost always associated with the German language. This is also the case with the Sabinov artifact:

Am Jar 1558 den 16 Marty in Gott Seliglich ent/schlaffen der Edl und
Vest Konrat Kappler von Fissenir / Ro(misch) Kay(serlichen) Majest(ät)
Hauptman auf Scharus der under di/sem steine Begraben leit Welchen
im seine geliebte ha/usfrau Margareta [- - -] einem gedechtnus [- - -].¹⁶

A unique and, at the same time, representative sepulchral monument of its time is the tomb of Juraj Šeredy (Seredy), a Šariš county governor and one of the most important magnates of the sixteenth century, in the Church of St Egidius in Bardejov, from the year 1557.¹⁷ The completely preserved red marble tumba presents basic information, such as the fact the artefact was made by the widow Katarína Bučinská. The carved poem, an epicedium, is undoubtedly the work of an educated pastor or rector, or possibly another scholar, who remains anonymous. Part of the mature Latin text is as follows:

HVNC TVMVLVM QVICVNQVE VIDES, MEDITARE VIATOR / MORTALEM
NVLLVM VIVERE POSSE DIV. / NON SI PRAESTARET CVNCTIS VIRTUTE,
QVOT VSQVA(M) / IN TOTO VIVVNT ORBE, SVB AXE POLI. / SED TAMNE EST
FOELIX ALYSQVE BEATIOR ILLE, / GLORIA QVEM SEQVITVR, CLARAQVE
FAMA VIRVM.¹⁸

14 "Epitaph of Sir Juraj Jezernicky, chief accountant of the Spiš Chamber of the Holy Imperial Majesty, who died on 23 September, in the Christian year 1577. Here lies Juraj Jezernicky, distinguished for his bravery, who died at the time of a violent plague. From his youth to the day of his death he served the divine emperors with unremitting zeal. It is exceedingly praiseworthy to serve mighty emperors, but it will be more glorious to serve God."

15 ČOVAN, *Historické nápisy zo Šariša*, 119–120.

16 "In the year 1558, on the 16th of March, in God's name, the noble and illustrious Konrad Kappler of Füssen, imperial-royal captain of the Šariš castle, who lies buried under this stone, which his beloved wife Margaretha ...had made in his memory (to commemorate him), fell blissfully asleep."

17 ČOVAN, *Historické nápisy zo Šariša*, 117–118; LUDIKOVÁ, *Hieronymo Canavesi*, 771–772.

18 "Think, pilgrim, as you gaze upon this tombstone, that any mortal may live long if he surpasses in virtue others however long-lived in this world. For is he not happier and more blessed than others who is accompanied

Although Latin is the dominant language in the inscriptional culture of the sites under investigation, German emerges as a strong competitor at certain stages. This is not just a matter of sepulchralia. In the case of some German burghers, for example, German texts appear on the portals of their houses in addition to Latin. The inscription on the portal of Konrad Haller's house in Bardejov dates from 1544. In the lining there is a text in the Early Humanist capital: "DER · SEGE · DES HER / MACHT · REICH · O(H) N(E) · MVHE".¹⁹

This is a quotation from the Old Testament book of Proverbs 10: 22. Inspiration from biblical or liturgical texts was becoming increasingly popular in the inscriptional culture of burghers or noblemen in this period. From the epigraphic point of view, it is a highly valuable source of information about the ideological preferences of individuals or certain groups within the population. This process reached its peak in the first half of the seventeenth century, especially in sepulchral culture, as we will return to later.

Following Haller's inscription, let us mention another Bardejov portal, this time with a typical house inscription for German regions: "WER GOT TRAVT DER WOLL BAVT 1566".²⁰ It is located No. 44 Town Hall Square, Bardejov, and was commissioned by the burgher Hans Cebner.

Numerous inscriptions on portals were created in this and later periods in Prešov. Their testimonial value is varied. In some cases they just give the initials of the owner and the year. Others offer a larger text expressing the worldview of the owner. An example of this is the house at 67 Hlavná Street, where the following inscription was carved in 1557 on the initiative of the probable owner, Petr Kuncz: "PRIMVM . QVERITE . REGNVM . DEI".²¹ This is a quotation from Matthew 6:33.

In the Early Modern period, a special epigraphic phenomenon comes to the fore, namely graffiti inscriptions. In contrast to the medieval period, it was very common for important individuals to be remembered in this way. In Prešov, a scholar called Weresch engraved the following in the tower of the Church of St Nicholas in 1599: "H(IC) F(VIT) MELICH(AR) WERESCH / A(NNO) D(OMINI) 1590".²² Weresch came from Selce in Zvolen county, and was ordained in Wittenberg in 1605 and studied in Bardejov, Strážky and Košice. He was a parish priest in several Czech localities, finally in Pukanec.²³

In Bardejov, David Gutgesel – one of Hungary's first typographers – decided to immortalize his memory in the form of graffiti, engraving his name in 1584 on the altar of St Anne in the Church of St Egidius: "DAVID GVTGE/SEL 1584 [- - -]". Moreover, this happened at the time when Gutgesel was the city mayor, and was undoubtedly a person of great significance in his time. The exposed location of the altar panel indicates a disrespect for the sacredness of the artefact, which was understandable in the case of Protestants. The counter-Reformation of the seventeenth century saw frequent scratchings of names, especially surnames.

by the fame and reputation of brave men?"

19 "God's blessings are enriching and without any effort." Recently to the development of inscriptions in German ŠEDIVÝ, *Über (Sprach) Grenzen hinweg*.

20 "He who believes in God, does good. 1566."

21 "Seek first the kingdom of God."

22 "Here was Melichar Weresch. In the year of our Lord 1590."

23 CSEPREGI, *Evangelikus lelkészek*, 433.

First Half of the Seventeenth Century

The first half of the seventeenth century was marked by political and religious events in Hungary that are visible in the field of inscriptional culture in the Pentapolitana towns. The high level of education of the burgher patriciate and the local nobility is reflected in the increasingly varied content of inscribed texts.

The desire of city governments to create representative epigraphs expressing the strength and advanced development of the city continued. This is visible in Levoča in inscriptions from the early seventeenth century. The Renaissance town hall was intended as a symbol of the city government, not only in terms of art but also through its epigraphy – just as in Bardejov a century earlier. The town hall underwent extensive reconstruction in 1615.²⁴ An now lost inscription used to be visible on the south wall of the town hall, celebrating peace as the basis for the free development of the town: "PACE REFLORESCUNT OPPIDA, MARTE CADUNT ANNO 1615".²⁵ On the west side, an inscription was added in the same year which, in turn, emphasises the essence of responsible government over the city: "PULCHRITUDO CIVITATIS CONCORDIA 1615".²⁶ The origin of the first inscription is not yet clear. However, the text about unity almost certainly comes from the work of the important German polymath Nicholas Reusner (1545–1602) from Silesia, whose family moved there from Transylvania. The idea of unity can be found in his collection of emblems. At the same time, however, it should be added that Reusner himself, as a humanist scholar, was inspired by ancient authors and referred to them directly in connection with unity. Whether Cicero or Sallustius, or before them Xenophon and Plato, they all emphasised unity and cooperation as essential prerequisites for a functioning state.²⁷

The libraries of the educated humanist burghers and nobles were full of the works of the aforementioned ancient authors, as is reflected in the inscriptional culture. In Prešov, at today's 65 Hlavná Street, an inscription in sgraffito decoration was created in the first quarter of the seventeenth century which is typical of this period in terms of content, language and palaeography. It is a combined Latin–German inscription, where the Latin is represented by modern capitals, while the German is traditionally associated with Fraktur: "CONCORDIA . RES . PARVAE. CRESCVNT . An gottes segen ist . alles gelegen . DISCORDIA . MAXIMA . DILABVNTVR".²⁸ The Latin part is based on chapter 10 of Sallustius's *De bello Iugurthino*.

Another Prešov epigraph from 1617 belongs to this group of inscriptions. It was created on the initiative of František Darholc, a nobleman from Šariš. His house was also rebuilt in the Renaissance style and numerous inscriptions were created using the sgraffito technique. In this case, however, they are simple inscriptions in the form of names that accompany and describe the upper-half figures of rulers from different periods of time, from Roman to Roman–German and Byzantine emperors, including

24 ČOVANOVÁ JANOŠÍKOVÁ, *Renesančná a manieristická malba*, 790–792.

25 "In peace cities flourish, in war they decline."

26 "The ornament of the city is unity". The same inscription is found today above the main entrance to the Town Hall, although it is not the original inscription from 1615.

27 *Emblemata Nicolai Reusneri I. c. partim ethica, et physica: partim verò Historica et Hieroglyphica, sed ad virtutis, ad morumq; doctrinam omnium ingeniosè traducta et in quatuor libros digesta cum Symbolis et inscriptionibus illustrium et clarorum virorum. Ex recensione Ieremiae Reusneri Leorini*, Francofurti 1581, 26.

28 "By concord small things grow, by disagreeableness great things are weakened. Everything depends on God's will."

"TIBERIVS // CALIGVLA // CLAVDIVS // NERO // GALBA // OTHO // VITELI/V S // AVCVS // VESPASIA/NVS // TITVS // DOMINICIANVS".

In this spirit, the inspiration of ancient mythology can also be seen on the most widespread epigraphic monuments of the period: sepulchral monuments. The first of two Košice epigraphs is found on a tombstone commissioned in 1623 by Michael Tutz, commander of the Košice armoury, for his wife and three children. Death is symbolically represented here by the River Lethe, from which the dead in the underworld drank to forget earthly life.²⁹

Immortality or eternal life is symbolised by Tithonos, the son of the Trojan king, on the tombstone of the children of the Košice senator Valentin Konczik.³⁰ Let us quote the whole poem of 1630, on which the eight poor sons console their father:

[HONORIBUS VIDVATA DOM]VS / [TVA LVGET] A[D] EM[TIS] / [CHARE
PATER SED NOS CHARITAS ECCE VOCAT] / [EVOCAT EX MISERA LACRI]
MA/[RVM] VAL[L]E [P]E[REN]N[EM] / [IN PATRIAM] NO[MEN C]VI [DEV]S /
O[MNI]POT[ENS] / [TENDIMVS HVC OMN]ES [A]D EV[M] / QVI [TIBI] DEDIT
[OC]T[O] / [QVIQVE] PETIT [DONVM QVOD] / [FVIT A]NTE [S]VV[M] / [INTER]
EA EN [TE]RRAE [VRSO TE]R / [ARCA TRADIT]V [V]S[O] / [SVSCI]T[A]T A[D]
TITONVM COR/DA NOSTRA DEV]S.³¹

Sepulcralia of various forms become the space of mature literary creation. Moreover, epicedia (funeral odes) or epitaphs in the literary sense of the word are sometimes signed. We know that sepulchral monuments included the poems of the most important Hungarian poet of the period, Jan Bocatius.³² Unfortunately, they have been preserved only in the secondary form, referred to in printed materials from the sixteenth century.³³

Several signed poems on sepulchral bearers have been preserved in Bardejov. The rector of the Bardejov school, Leonard Wagner, created, among other things, an epic poem for the tombstone of Bardejov's mayor (richtár), Tomáš Blimberg, in 1626:

THOMAS BLIMBERGVS VIR SERVANTISSIMVS / AEQVI / SPE VITAE
AETERNAE CONDITVR HOC TVMVLO / EXPECTANS CHRISTI L[AE] TAM
SVPER AERA / VOCEM / SVRGITE, QVEIS MORTE EST VERA PARATA / SALVS
/ L[EONARDVS] W[AGNER] R[ECTOR] S[CHOLAE] B[ARTPHENSIS].³⁴

Leonard's brother, Martin Wagner, one of the most prominent figures of the first half of the seventeenth century in the Pentapolitana region, was also known for his poetic work. In addition to holding the position of parish priest of Bardejov for 44 years, he

29 ČOVAN, *Historické nápisy z územia Košíc*, 36.

30 SVOBODA, *Encyklopedie*, 170.

31 "Stripped of ornaments, your house mourns, dear father. But behold, love calls us out of the miserable valley of lamentation to the eternal homeland, whose name is Almighty God. To him we all eight come. Those whom he has given to you, he asks back as a gift that was formerly his own. Meantime, while we have been laid in the earth in the coffin according to custom, God will raise our hearts to eternal life."

32 BOCATIUS, *Hungaridos libri*, 393–440.

33 ČOVAN, *Historické nápisy zo Šariša*, 139–140.

34 "In this tomb is buried Thomas Blimberg, a law-abiding man, hoping for eternal life, awaiting the joyful voice of Christ from heaven: arise, you for whom true salvation is ready. Leonard Wagner, rector of the Bardejov school."

was also the presbyter of the Pentapolitana from 1645 to 1666. One of his epicedia can be seen carved on the tombstone of Bardejov's mayor Valentín Berger dated 1631:

SAEPE SIBI CVPIENS DISOLVI ET VIVERE CHR(IST)O / BERGERVS TVMVLI
MOLE SVB HACCE CVBAT / DVLCE SOLI QVONDAM FVERAT DECVS AST /
MODO SVMMI / DVLCEVS ILLE MICAT SIDVS IN AXEPOLI / NONNE MICET
CHR(IST)O QVI VIXIT MORTVVS ATQ / CHRISTO AD QVEM AETERNAE FESTA
QVIE/TIS AGIT / TEMPVS ERIT QVANDO REDIVIVM NVMINE / CORPVS /
COELESTES SOCIA MENTE VIDEBIT OPES / TVM CHR(IST)O TE[- -]S CEV
LVCIDA STELLA / PER OMNE / FVLGEBIT MIRIS SOLE MICANTE MODIS /
M(ARTINVS) W(AGNER) P(LEBANVS) B(ARTPHENSIS).³⁵

Unfortunately, the inscription is damaged in some places on the artefact. This is, of course, not an isolated case in the context of epigraphic monuments, which are often exposed to the adversity of time or weather conditions. Many rare inscriptional artefacts, especially sepulchral objects, can only be reconstructed on the basis of older sources. These are unique monuments of inscriptional culture. In Prešov, in the tower of the Church of St Nicholas, a long-hidden undeciphered text represents, especially from a literary point of view, an extremely valuable source.³⁶ It is found on a child's tombstone from 1645, dedicated to Samuel Figuli, a six-year-old boy, the son of a Sabinov burgher, who was a victim of the plague, as the deciphered text around the edges of the stone informs us:

[- - -] / [OPTIMAE] INDOLIS ET SPEI SEX [ANNORV(M)] PVERVLI SA/MVELIS
F[IGVLI CIBINIENSIS ANNO] / 1645 DIE [SAMVELIS TEMPORE PESTIS CRASSI
EPPER(IESINI) IN D(OMI)NO DEFVNCT[VS]". At the bottom there is a unique
epicedium: "[FICTILE VAS IACET] HIC FIGVLO / [GENITORE CREATVM /
QVOD RVPTVM] FIGVLI [CVNCTIPOTENTE] MANV / [AST ANIMVS COELO
NAT(VS) / SAMVELIS , AD ILLVM , / QVI DEDIT HVNC ITERV(M) / CELSA
PETENDO , REDIT / TV , QVI FORTE VIDES HOC BV/STVM TRISTE MEMENTO
/ QVA] COPVS MISERV(M) [QVOD SIS] ET IPSE EXITVS.³⁷

In addition to the prosopographical and original literary dimensions, the epigraphic texts of the sepulchral monuments have one more typical feature: the regular occurrence of biblical texts.³⁸ This makes the sepulchral artefacts from this period an important source in terms of the ecclesiastical or theological history of the region. The

35 "Beneath this tombstone lies Berger, who so often longed both to die and to live in Christ. Once he was a graceful ornament under the sun, but now, by the will of the Most High, he shines even more gracefully as a star in the vault of heaven. May it shine to Christ who has conquered death, to Christ with whom the feast of eternal rest is being held. The time will come when, by God's will, the quickened body and spirit will see the glory of heaven. Then, like ... or a bright star, it will shine upon all with wondrous light. Martin Wagner, parish priest of Bardejov."

36 Reconstruction of the inscription possible on the basis of a photograph from 1966. Archive of the Monuments Office of the Slovak Republic, Negatives Collection. Photo: Imro, no. 57 608.

37 "Here lies a potter's vase, created and destroyed by the almighty hand of the Potter-Creator. But the soul is heaven-born. Samuel returns it again to Him who gave it to him. You who happen to see this grave, remember that you are but a poor body, and you too shall die."

38 FAVREAU, *Bible et épigraphie*, 17–52.

selection of biblical texts is of course subject to the event with which the sepulchral artifact is associated. In most cases, such a text expresses the transience of earthly life or the hope of eternal life. Trends in the popularity of certain biblical texts can also be observed. As in most of northern Hungary, a passage from the Old Testament Book of Job, 19:25–27, was the most popular in the cities of Pentapolitana. It is found, for example, on the sepulchral inscription for Jan Jakub Grynaeus, a Slovak preacher in Sabinov and rector of the local school, who died in 1611:

Credo, quod redemptor meus vivit, et in novissimo die de terra su-
scitaturus sum, et rursum circumdabor pelle mea, et in carne mea vi-
debo Deum, Quem visurus sum ego ipse, et Oculi mei conspecturi Sunt
/ et non alius.³⁹

An identical text in Hungarian is found on the tombstone of the children of Juraj Kalmar, a burgher from Košice, dating from 1622:

[I]OB XIX / TVDOM HOGI AZ EN / MEGVALTOM [EL] ES / HOGI [A]Z [VTOL]
SO / NAPON [AZ] EN [TESTE]M / FEOLTA[MAD A]Z PORBOL / VGIAN[IEZEM
TESTE]M/BEN [MEGLATOM AZ] / ISTENT E[S EZEN SZE]/MEIMM[EL MIDEON]
/ AZ FEO[LDBEOL FEOL]/[TAMADOK].

As a source of inspiration, biblical and liturgical texts dominated the inscriptional culture of our cities. However, they were not the only ones. Let us recall here the long-undeciphered fragments of texts accompanying various allegories of music that adorned the empora (interior gallery) now housed in Spiš Museum in Levoča. We have managed to identify couplets that describe in detail depictions of the Lady with the Flute, the Lady with the Lute and the Lady Conductor:

HUIC DEVOTA SUAS INTENDANT ORGANA CORDAS / OMNIA QUAE MUSIS
GRATIA IUNCTA PROBAT // HUIC [ARGUTA] SUAS RESONENT PSAL[TERIA]
LAUDES / [VOCALES CYTHARAE] CARMINA [BLANDA SONENT] // IN LA[U]
DES APTATE TUBAS, CLANGORE IEHOVAM / [ET LIT]UI CURVI [ET] CORNUA
RAUCA C[ANANT].

The author of these verses is the sixteenth-century German poet Helius Eobanus Hessus. They are found in a work in which he explains or describes each and every Old Testament psalm through elegies.⁴⁰ The couplets from Levoča refer to the last one, Psalm 150, which glorifies God through various musical instruments.

Linguistically, epigraphs in this period were predominantly in Latin. As a distant second, Hungarian appears rarely alongside German, especially in Košice. Among the local Calvinists, Hungarian was used for decorating items of worship, along with Latin. One example is a gilded plate given to the Reformed Church in Košice by the

39 "I know that my Redeemer lives, and on the Day of Judgment I shall rise from the earth and see my God again in my own skin and with my own body. Verily I myself shall see him, my eyes shall behold him, and not another."

40 *Psalterium universum carmine elegiaco redditum atque explicatum, ac nuper in Schola Marpurgensi aeditum*. Zurich, Froschauer, 1538. <https://bildsuche.digitale-sammlungen.de/index.html?c=viewer&bandnummer=bsb00077174&pimage=2&v=150&nav=&l=en> (accessed: 06-05-2025)

vice-Comes of Abauj county, Juraj Udvarhelyi and his wife, dating from 1650. Along the edges of the plate the following text is engraved:

IOHAN(NEM) VI : V(ERS) . 27. MUNKALODGIATOK. NEM AZ ELEDELERT. Â.
MELÿ ELVES HANEM AZ KENÿERT MELI MEG MARAD. AZ. OROK . ELETRE.
MELÿET AZ EMBERNEK FIA AD / NEKTEK MERT EZT. E. VEGRE. PETSETLT
EL AZ. ATÿA TUDNI ILLIK AZ. ISTEN : ANNO SALUTIS NOSTRAE : 1650 : Die.
23. D(ecem)b(ri)s.⁴¹

The quotation from the Gospel according to John comes directly from the Hungarian translation of the Bible from 1590, which was written by the Calvinist pastor Gáspár Károlyi.⁴²

In Bardejov, the northernmost town of Pentapolitana, Polish influences can be traced, including in the linguistic sphere either. Polish appears on a unique Bardejov artefact dating back to 1522:⁴³ the table painting "The Farewell of Christ and His Mother", created by the painter Ján Koller, who signed the painting. Almost a hundred years later, the work was renovated by another Bardejov painter Ján Grünwald, at which time a five-language inscription quoting the Old Testament Book of Psalms, namely Psalm 111:5–6, was also created:

BENE VIRO QVI MISERETVR ET COMMODAT . / QVIA IN AETERNV(M) NON
COMMOVEBITVR / Woll dem der da barmherzig ist / Den ehr wird ewig
bleiben / Io annak az ferfunak az ki máson könyörül es kölczönt ad . /
annak okáert soha megh nem indul / Blogo slaweni milosierni clowiek,
/ bo na wieki trwac bedzie. // БЛВНЫ ТО КТОРЫ Е МЛРДНЫ / СЛАВА
ЕГО ТРЪВАТИ БОДЕ НАВЪКЫ 1614 / 17 МАІ.⁴⁴

Apart from the fact that in this case the palaeography of the inscription is also language-dependent (Latin in modern capitals, German in Fraktur, Polish and Hungarian executed in humanist minuscule, Old Church Slavonic in Cyrillic), the text is interesting in that it expresses the functionality of the artefact. The painting is currently on display in the exhibition of the Šariš Museum in Bardejov, in the historic town hall. Originally, however, it was located in the parish church, directly above the alms box. The words "It is good for him who takes pity and lends, for it will remain forever in his memory" are therefore an ideal choice for this space. Without context, however, their meaning would be of insufficient value. This, too, is a peculiarity of epigraphic monuments. Often we can fully interpret them based on the context of where, when and why they were created. With movable artefacts, these circumstances are often lost.

Finally, we must again mention a specific type of epigraphic monument: graffiti inscriptions. Unlike all others, graffiti is unique for the spontaneity of its creation and

41 "(The Gospel according to) John (chapter) 6, verse 27. Do not strive for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man gives you. For God the Father hath set his seal upon him. In the year of our salvation, 1650, December 23."

42 https://oszkdk.oszk.hu/storage/00/00/56/68/dd/1/RMK_L_236.pdf (accessed: 06-05-2025)

43 ČOVAN, *Historické nápisy zo Šariša*, 104–105.

44 For the analysis of the Old Church Slavonic couplet I would like to thank Mgr. Martin Grošík, from Rome's – Pontificium Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum.

often its content. Apparently, religious fervour compelled an anonymous author to create a graffiti inscription on the Bardejov Altar of Piety (the Sorrowful Virgin Mary), specifically on the Annunciation of the Apostles: "[EVNTES IN] MVNDVM / VNIVERSVM". This is part of the verse "et dixit eis euntes in mundum universum praedicate evangelium omni creatura", i.e. "He said to them: Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature".⁴⁵

In the vast majority of graffiti writings, however, the aim is to reveal one's identity and thus leave a memory of oneself. In the seventeenth century, this was often done even by prominent figures who were certainly not just members of the burghers. For example, in Bardejov, a high-ranking nobleman carved graffiti, probably in the most exposed place in the entire Church of St Egidius – the central statue of St Egidius, which was part of the main altar: "L(ADISLAV) R(EVAI) / A(NNO) 1617 / LADI(SLAV) RE/VAI". It refers to Ladislaus III Révay of the Trebost branch of the family, who became one of the richest noblemen in the country and in 1635 received the baronial title for the family.⁴⁶ Ladislav engraved this inscription as a seventeen-year-old boy, when he was studying at the local lyceum in Bardejov.⁴⁷ Considering the year 1617, it is certain that Ladislav, still a Protestant at that time, also took part in the three-day celebrations the people of Bardejov held in honour of Martin Luther's speech. It may have been then that the inscription was created.⁴⁸

In 1647, in Košice, on one of the stone ribs of the south tower of the Cathedral, another graffiti of another important personality, but from a completely different social class, was painted: "SAMUEL MARCKFELNER / 1647". Marckfelner was a native of Košice, but during his lifetime he became famous as an organist in Levoča. He is also one of the oldest known organ composers in the territory of present-day Slovakia.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Inscriptional culture in the Pentapolitana cities responded to the political, social and cultural events of the Early Modern period. Strong influences of humanism, the Renaissance and the Protestant religious movement – which was active in the towns of Pentapolitana shortly after the appearance of Martin Luther – can be seen very early on. The depiction of Luther with an accompanying text in Levoča Town Hall as early as the mid-sixteenth century is just one of many examples of his influence. The urban character of the inscriptional culture is logically manifested in the desire of the urban patriciate to declare its independence in the form of inscriptions. This can be seen in the early seventeenth-century inscriptions on Levoča town hall.

Throughout the Early Modern period, however, the dominant manifestation of epigraphic texts was on sepulchral monuments. The tombstone, epitaph, tumba or mortuary were spaces for the creation of inscriptions that provide a wealth of prosopographical data. Many contain quotations from the Bible, which is highly valuable from the point-of-view of ecclesiastical or theological knowledge. In the cities of

⁴⁵ Mark 16:15.

⁴⁶ MAČUHA, *Najvýznamnejší Révaiovci*, 40.

⁴⁷ NAGY, *Magyarország családai*, 705.

⁴⁸ In that case, the inscription would have been made sometime between 10 and 12 November. Archive of the Evangelical (Augsburg Confession) Parish in Bardejov [Archív ev. a.v. fary v Bardejove], *Protocollum pastorale vetustissimum a Reformatione ad 1755*, unnumbered, pp. 13, 378.

⁴⁹ MATÚŠ, *Samuel Marckfelner*, 137.

the Pentapolitana we can also see the popularity of certain biblical texts, such as passages from the Book of Job or the Old Testament Psalms. In addition, sepulchral monuments are the source of valuable literary works, mostly epicedia or epitaphs. These are sometimes signed. Their authors were educated teachers from the local municipal schools or clerics from the ranks of the clergy.

In keeping with the tradition of humanist scholarship, ancient works and ancient mythology were also sources of inspiration in inscriptional culture. Graffiti inscriptions represent another characteristic of epigraphic culture in the towns of the Pentapolitana region. These authors of these unofficial inscriptions were often prominent personalities – examples include a mayor, a famous musician and a member of an influential Hungarian noble family. As far as the language of the inscriptions is concerned, Latin dominated throughout the period. Within certain circles among the German burghers there was a leaning towards German, often in combination with Latin. In Bardejov, to the north, the influence of Polish can be seen, and in Košice Hungarian inscriptions are present.

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