

Summary

The study deals with the term *locusta* which is used in ancient and medieval Latin texts (e.g. in the encyclopaedia *De natura rerum* written by Thomas of Cantimpré in the 13th century) with two meanings, denoting two different animals: the locust, which was categorised as a “worm” (*vermis*), and the lobster, which was seen as an aquatic animal (*piscis, animal aquaticum*). The same meanings are associated with the terms *locusta* or *locustus* in Czech medieval sources written in Latin: the *Glossary* by the 14th century writer Bartholomaeus de Solencia, also known as Claretus, the work *Liber viginti arcium* by the 15th century encyclopaedist Paulerinus, and the encyclopaedic dictionary *Vocabularius dicitus Lactifer* composed by the priest Iohannes Aquensis at the turn of the 16th century.

The word *locusta*, however, occurs in several works of the Bohemian Middle Ages with yet another meaning – denoting the sweet-smelling lemon balm or the sweet-tasting tree leaves sucked by bees to produce honey; John the Baptist is said to have used the leaves as food when dwelling in the desert. Here, again, we can trace the influence of Thomas of Cantimpré, who claims in one passage of his encyclopaedia that some authors regard the term *locusta* as a name of a plant and believe John the Baptist ate this plant in the desert. Surprisingly, this assertion can be found in Book IV which is dedicated to quadrupeds, namely in the chapter focusing on the terrestrial animal named *locusta*. This chapter from Thomas’ work influenced probably also Claretus’ *Glossary* which contains an unidentified term *locuna* in the chapter on animals (*De bestiis*).

The study discusses the possible reasons that might have convinced Thomas of Cantimpré to classify *locusta* not only as an insect or as a fish, but also as a terrestrial quadruped. Thomas of Cantimpré was probably inspired by Jacques de Vitry’s account of creatures which were consumed by John the Baptist in the desert, by *Leviticus* which lists the name *locusta* among winged animals that “walk on all fours”, by St. Augustine’s *Confessiones*, by the commentary *Glossa ordinaria* and other sources. Its faulty classification was crowned by contamination with information from the commentaries on *Proverbs* about the hyrax –

a quadruped known under the name *lepusculus*. As a result of misunderstanding, the animal named *locusta* in his book *De quadrupedibus* gained new qualities and was transformed into completely different creature.

Keywords: medieval Latin lexicography; ancient and medieval zoology; locust; lobster; *locusta*; Thomas of Cantimpré; Jacques de Vitry; Bartholomaeus de Solencia; Claretus; Albert the Great; diet of John the Baptist; *lepusculus*; Eucherius of Lyon; Aristoteles Latinus

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