

keré jsem zde popsal. I když jsou tedy dokonale a podivuhodné všechny Boží počiny, pro některé z nich bychom měli Bohu vzdávat chválu a pro jiné velebít jeho podivuhodnost.“<sup>69</sup>

## Summary

### *DE GUSTIBUS NON EST DISPUTANDUM. UNUSUAL FOODS OF EXOTIC PEOPLES IN THE VOCABULARIUS DICTUS LACTIFER*

The dictionary *Vocabularius dictus Lactifer* was written at the brink of the 16<sup>th</sup> century by the preacher and author of religious texts Jan Bosák Vodňanský (Iohannes Aquensis). It is the latest bohemical source of excerption for entries in the *Latinitatis medii aevi lexicon Bohemorum*. The author provided the description of nouns and adjectives, verbs and adverbs in the first three books of the *Vocabulary*. Its second part is a form of encyclopaedia of natural sciences which lists, within nine books, various human monsters, illnesses, trees, herbs, stones, birds, four-legged animals, fish and, finally, snakes and worms. The fourth book (*De monstruosis hominibus*) is a rich source of various names as it is dedicated to humans, individuals and exotic peoples, mythological characters, who differ, in their appearances or behaviour, from what was perceived as normal in the Middle Ages. Amongst all the deviations listed by the author, based on classical and medieval sources, the most interesting are the descriptions of unusual eating habits in certain Asian and African peoples.

Classical and medieval authors did not concentrate primarily on individual meals when describing exotic foods. Rather, they provided descriptions of various ways of obtaining and preparing meals. The Greeks considered themselves civilised because they drank wine and milk as well as water. They also prepared the plants they grew and the meats they hunted before consuming them. This was the main difference between the Greeks and the primitive peoples whose diet consisted mainly of a single kind of crop (lotus, fallen fruits, seeds, roots) or a single kind

<sup>69</sup> JAN VODŇANSKÝ, *Vocabularius dictus Lactifer*, fol. A 2vb–3ra.



of meat, often from quite unusual animals (fish, snakes, lizards, grasshoppers, crickets, worms), sometimes even eaten raw. Furthermore, the means by which food was obtained did not require further processing and the final product was not heated, frozen or fermented so that its consumption is reminiscent of animals feeding, while eating raw meat is only a step away from cannibalism.

Besides describing eating habits considered strange by the medieval author, even though they reflected the way people ate in Antiquity, classical and medieval sources, including Vodňanský's *Vocabulary*, provide the description of anomalies which are questionable from the present point of view and for which there is a lack of evidence and are as such only explainable by a number of hypotheses. These are descriptions of people living on liquids only, people whose lips have grown together and who only have a tiny opening under their noses with which they eat one seed at a time, and people without mouths who live on fruit aroma. Regardless of whether these descriptions derive from misinterpretations or simplifications of original sources now lost, or whether they are fabrications of classical and medieval authors, they have become an integral and popular part of *mirabilia* collections and they have contributed to the perception of Africa and Asia as exotic lands inhabited by fantastic monsters.

Keywords: human monsters; *Vocabularius dictus Lactifer*; classical and medieval ethnography; eating habits; vegetarianism

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