

# Marian Plague Columns in Jaroměř and Polička: A Comparative Study on Baroque Sculptural Decorations of the Bohemian Urban Public Space in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century

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Based on fragmentally preserved sources as well as existing literature related to the topic (especially regional historiography, art history and historic preservation), the present study sets Marian plague columns into a broader context. Through the comparison of two minor East-Bohemian towns of a comparable population, it follows the factors playing a significant role in the creation of complex Baroque sculptural compositions. At the same time, it aims to identify the functions that the sculptures were to fulfil through their position in the public space. In this sense the study is inspired by the classic essay by Peter Burke called *Conspicuous consumption in seventeenth-century Italy*, which considers “the consumption” to be a specific form of communication. The composition of Marian plague columns can be perceived as an undeniable form of communication. From multiple perspectives, the article documents the key determinants, which are sometimes rather surprising, influencing the choice of partial components of the sculptural compositions as well as their overall impression – the communicative intention. Both Marian plague columns, to this day the most important monuments decorating the public space of the towns in question, are therefore approached in an interdisciplinary way especially in the context of the history of the towns, their manors and the East-Bohemian region. Therefore, the religious situation of both towns and their surroundings is not overlooked either. With regard to the fact that Jaroměř and Polička have been royal dowry towns, the Marian plague columns also reflect the relation to the Bohemian queen, which is expressed verbally as inscriptions on them. In particular, the artwork in Polička and the events related to its creation importantly signalize the “conspicuous consumption”.

Keywords: The Kingdom of Bohemia. Early modern times. Royal dowry towns. Jaroměř. Polička. Marian plague column. Conspicuous consumption. Crises of the urban society. Communication.

## Introduction

One of the significant parts of the religious life in Baroque Bohemia (and obviously, not only Bohemia) was the cult of saints,<sup>1</sup> which, in the Bohemian milieu, is characteristic of the Catholic tradition, whereas non-Catholic traditions tend to adopt a critical and negative stance on it.<sup>2</sup> Catholic believers were provided with an entire crowd of saints as

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1 MIKULEC, *Náboženský život a barokní zbožnost*, 31.

2 This was the reality of the early modern times; for instance, the question of the cult of saints in Utraquism would be different. Nevertheless, the Lutheran tradition adopted a more benevolent stance than the later Reformation movements, e.g., influenced by Calvinism. Orthodox traditions, where the cult of saints is very strong, are not taken into consideration in the present article.

their models, advocates and assistants.<sup>3</sup> The top of the imaginary pyramid of saints has always been occupied by the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary,<sup>4</sup> whose statues very often decorated and sanctified the urban public space,<sup>5</sup> especially on the plague columns<sup>6</sup> erected in the early decades of the eighteenth century, i.e., on the plague columns built as a reaction to the end of plague epidemic, or as thanksgiving for the protection of the area from plague.<sup>7</sup> These plague columns have rightly enjoyed continuous scientific attention<sup>8</sup> as they have been considered as a significant and clearly visible expression of the Catholic faith and tradition.

The research was also focused on the Marian columns of Jaroměř and Polička in the past few years. Based on fragmentally preserved sources as well as existing literature related to the topic (especially regional historiography, art history and historic preservation),<sup>9</sup> the present study sets Marian plague columns into a broader context. Through the comparison of two minor East-Bohemian towns of a comparable population it follows the factors playing a significant role in the creation of the complex Baroque sculptural compositions. At the same time, it aims to identify the functions that the sculptures were to fulfil through their position in the public space. In this sense the study is inspired by the classic essay by Peter Burke called *Conspicuous consumption in seventeenth-century Italy*, which considers "the consumption" to be a specific form of communication.<sup>10</sup> The composition of Marian plague columns can be perceived as an undeniable form of communication. From multiple perspectives, the article documents the key determinants, which are sometimes rather surprising, influencing the choice of partial components of the sculptural compositions as well as their overall impression – the communicative intention. Both Marian plague columns, to this day the most important monuments decorating the public space of the towns in question, are therefore approached in an interdisciplinary way especially in the context of the history of the towns, their manors and the East-Bohemian region. Therefore, the religious situation of both towns and their surroundings is not overlooked either. With regard to the fact that Jaroměř and Polička have been royal dowry towns, the Marian plague columns also reflect the relation to the Bohemian queen, which is expressed verbally as inscriptions on the columns. In particular, the artwork in Polička and the events related

3 On the categories of the saints' functions, see: ADAM, *Liturgický rok*, 195–196.

4 What is meant here is the figures of saints. Naturally, the top position in the hierarchical cult has been occupied by God in three divine persons, i.e., the Holy Trinity – God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

5 The sanctification of the public space, when the sacred was brought out of the churches to the streets, was especially important in areas that were recatholized. Cf. HERSCHE, *Muße und Verschwendung*, 557.

6 This term is used in the general context; when describing concrete objects, a more specific term – obelisk or pillar – is used, based on the terminology of scientific literature.

7 The latest book on plague epidemics is JIRKOVÁ, "Větší-li se, či menší mor". The book presents a summary of Czech and foreign literature on the topic.

8 Basic literature on the topic includes e.g. ŠORM – KRAJČA, *Mariánské sloupy v Čechách a na Moravě*. SLOUKA, *Mariánské a morové sloupy*. A useful aid is the series of publications by MAXOVÁ – NEJEDLÝ – ZAHRADNÍK, *Mariánské, trojiční a další světecké sloupy*. Published for individual Bohemian regions and districts of Eastern Bohemia as a supplement of the journal *Zprávy památkové péče*.

9 Namely PAUL, *Braunův Mariánský sloup*. MAXOVÁ – NEJEDLÝ – ZAHRADNÍK, *Mariánské, trojiční a další světecké sloupy*, 106–108 and 76–79. KNAPP, *Paměti královského věnného města*. JUNEK, *Polička*. NEJEDLÝ – GLÁSER, *Mariánský sloup v Poliče*. JUNEK – KONEČNÝ, *Dějiny města Poličky*.

10 BURKE, Peter. *Conspicuous consumption in seventeenth-century Italy*, 132–149.

to its creation importantly signalize the “conspicuous consumption”, the function of which was to differentiate Polička from other Bohemian towns.<sup>11</sup>

The selected comparative method helps to highlight the unique constellation of the factors of the time within the towns chosen, and to capture the tendencies observed not only in Bohemian towns. As the earlier research carried out in some early modern European towns has proved, sumptuous monuments typically appear in the public space at the times of an evident multi-layered crisis. Without the knowledge of the local situation it might be interpreted as a proof of prosperity and well-being in the broadest sense of the word. However, as has been proved by the complex research by Amanda Wunder on the example of seventeenth-century Seville, at the times of an economic crisis, social conflicts and natural disasters, Baroque art was flourishing.<sup>12</sup> A certain parallel can be seen to the situation within the Bohemian royal towns, which had been going through a similar crisis and decline since the Thirty Years’ War. Only some royal towns managed to overcome these problems as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century. In East Bohemia it was, in particular, Hradec Králové, traditionally the most significant town of the region, and the small town of Polička which surprisingly achieved stabilization. Despite Jaroměř ranking among the towns that were unmercifully affected by the decline, we find significant proof of Baroque art there.

The present study aims to illustrate that, by means of correct interpretation of sculptural decorations and understanding the historic space, it is possible to contribute to detailed knowledge not only of the early modern urban society but also the symbolism and functionality of Baroque sculptures and the presentation of Catholicity as such.<sup>13</sup>

### **The royal dowry town of Jaroměř and its pillar from 1723–1727**

The royal dowry town of Jaroměř, dating back to the reign of Přemysl Otakar II, ranked among minor, and in many respects rather inferior, royal towns of the Kingdom of Bohemia in the Middle Ages and early modern times.<sup>14</sup> As the research has shown so far, the cause was the choice of a rocky hillock as a space for the foundation of a town surrounded by town walls. Although the town was situated on the Polish-Glatz route and both suburbs at the confluence of two rivers – Elbe and Úpa<sup>15</sup> – were surrounded by fertile lowlands, these potentially beneficial factors did not prevail over the drawback of the low number of town houses, resulting in a square of the street type.<sup>16</sup> The town with its suburbs is thought to have had 2,000 inhabitants in the first decades of the eighteenth century, which was below the average within the royal

11 In the case of Polička, a chronicle written a hundred years after the construction of the column states that the monument was erected to the honour of the town. NEJEDLÝ – GLÁSER, *Mariánský sloup v Poličce*, 33.

12 WUNDER, *Baroque Seville*.

13 With regard to the focus of the study, attention is not paid to detailed architectural description of the columns. References to publications quoted are included in the footnotes, especially in footnote 10.

14 A modern synthesis of the urban history of Jaroměř has been missing so far; therefore, the most notable source of knowledge is KNAPP, *Paměti královského věnného města*. A collective work of historians and historical geographers was published at the end of 2020: ŠIMŮNEK, *Historický atlas měst České republiky*, sv. 31.

15 The confluence of the rivers Metuje and Elbe is situated in the area of the former Ples manor. The area of Josefov, named after Emperor Joseph II and turned into a bastion fortress in the second half of the eighteenth century, is part of Jaroměř now, thus situating the town at the confluence of three rivers.

16 On the historical-geographical characteristics of the town see: VOJTÍŠKOVÁ, *Královské věnné město Jaroměř*, 239–261.

towns of the Bohemian Kingdom of that time.<sup>17</sup> In 1680 the inhabitants of Jaroměř probably had to face a kind of infection, whereas the town was probably spared from the plague epidemic of 1713–1715, as there is no record of it. Therefore, they still used the only cemetery at the Church of St James in St James's suburb. Members of more affluent families were buried in the crypt of St James's Church or St Nicolas's Church, indisputably the town's dominant buildings.<sup>18</sup>



Figure 1: A section of Müller's map of Bohemia from 1720 depicting the town of Jaroměř, the nearby city of Hradec Králové and the town of Dvůr Králové nad Labem<sup>19</sup>

The town's inferiority is also substantiated by lower administration. In 1719 a complaint is recorded about the municipal scribe being lazy and not keeping the town hall's manual, a record of the agenda of the municipal council. The fact that there had usually been only a single scribe also supports the inferior position of the town. In 1725 governor's clerks and regional officers also criticized that neither were regular

17 Based on the data of the Theresian Land Registry from 1757, the town belonged to a group of 45 towns with 200–300 houses liable for taxes. FIALOVÁ et al. *Dějiny obyvatelstva českých zemí*, 130.

18 ŠIMŮNEK, *Historický atlas měst České republiky*, sv. 31, 23.

19 "Müllerova mapa Čech". Accessed 11 September 2020.

[http://oldmaps.geolab.cz/map\\_viewer.pl?lang=cs&map\\_root=mul&map\\_region=ce&map\\_list=c009](http://oldmaps.geolab.cz/map_viewer.pl?lang=cs&map_root=mul&map_region=ce&map_list=c009).

Tuesday markets held nor the annual fair, starting on Saint Bartholomew's feast day.<sup>20</sup> Disrupted market activity is known of from other royal towns especially as a result of a plague epidemic or an imminent war. The lower economic level of the town is also supported by the size of the manor of Jaroměř. Although prior to the fatal confiscation of land property in 1547<sup>21</sup> the town had owned a middle-sized manor in comparison with other royal towns, in the latter half of the sixteenth century the town ranked among those possessing minimal land property: the town's subjects, or the serfs of the Jaroměř hospital in legal terms, were the only inhabitants of several homesteads in the village of Kohoutov (the record of tax liability "berní rula" records 7 1/8 of the total number of tax units called "osedlý"),<sup>22</sup> inhabitants of two homesteads in Kopaniny and perhaps inhabitants of several homesteads in Kladruby (e.g., T. V. Bílek does not name them in his *Dějiny konfiskací*;<sup>23</sup> the record of tax liability mentions one husbandman and one cotter, i.e., 1 1/8 of the unit called "osedlý"<sup>24</sup>). Despite numerous arguments, a special position was held by Čáslavky, Hořence and Dolany,<sup>25</sup> villages bound to Jaroměř with a special tax liability, called "šos".<sup>26</sup> Surrounded by large noble domains, Jaroměř could not acquire a significant income from this property. With regard to a great deal of domestic problems, it is not surprising that Jaroměř was classified as a town whose economy was subject to sovereign supervision by establishing the economic office in the early eighteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

An accompanying fact of the above-mentioned processes, however unfavourable in many respects, was, in accordance with other regions of the Bohemian lands, the spread of the Baroque style in architecture and art. In 1670, while recovering from the consequences of the Thirty Years' War, Jaroměř saw a great fire: two thirds of the town houses burnt down as well as both Vartas,<sup>28</sup> nearly all of St James's suburb, and several houses along the town walls. Due to the wooden sheltered pedestrian bridge across the river Elbe, the fire also spread to the other riverbank. The result was that 124 houses and shelters were destroyed as well as the Renaissance town hall (which was to be rebuilt in the Baroque style), St Nicholas's Church, St James's Church, the deanery, the town school, the municipal mill with its water tower and the municipal malthouse. The renovation, influenced by Baroque trends reaching the town in later decades, is exemplified by, for example, the Baroque door of No. 64 with its relief decoration marked with the year 1672, nowadays displayed in the museum of Jaroměř.<sup>29</sup>

Monitoring Baroque sculpture decorations, we have to mention a sandstone column from 1686, an early Baroque piece preserved in St James's suburb after a series of

20 KNAPP, *Paměti královského věnného města*, 150–152.

21 On the anti-Habsburg resistance see: VOREL, *Stavovský odboj roku 1547*.

22 ČADKOVÁ – ZAHRADNÍKOVÁ, *Berní rula 15. Kraj Hradecký IV*, 247.

23 BÍLEK, *Dějiny konfiskací v Čechách*, 1096–1097.

24 ČADKOVÁ – ZAHRADNÍKOVÁ, *Berní rula 15. Kraj Hradecký IV*, 248.

25 On a detailed account of the problem, see: ČERNIKOVSKÝ, *Lokální konflikt v byrokratickém soukolí*, 57–96.

26 These were not liege villages subject to liege duties; their position was specific.

27 On economy in the context of Bohemia, see: JANÁK – HLEDÍKOVÁ – DOBEŠ, *Dějiny správy v českých zemích*, 220.

28 With regard to the limited area of the inner town, there were two minor enclosed areas of the street type connected to St James's suburb, called Malá and Velká Varta; their aim was to increase the defensive capacity of the town. Both areas have survived without major changes. WOLF, *Středověké opevnění města Jaroměře*, 37.

29 SLAVÍK, *Uměleckohistorické památky*, 73.



mishaps. Who commissioned the sculpture, called Calvary, is not clear.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, even the composition of this column is a certain form of communication by the artwork with its surroundings. In the upper part, i.e., the chapel, there are reliefs of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ (Ecce Homo), Saint Joseph and Saint Sebastian, the patron against plague; this column was also erected as a reaction to the recent plague epidemic, mentioned above. On the square plinth there are reliefs of Saint John the Baptist, Saint John of Nepomuk and Saint Florian, a protector against fires. Erected to commemorate the liberation of Buda from Turkish dominance, as tradition has it, the column was the place of prayer on the so-called cross days and on Saint Mark's feast day when people walked to the fields to pray for a rich harvest.<sup>31</sup> The column fulfilled its communicative function not only in its position but also through the processions held in due course. Depicting Saint John of Nepomuk attests to his spreading cult even before his official canonization in 1729.<sup>32</sup> To describe the penetrating trends of the Baroque architecture in Jaroměř, an equestrian sculpture of Saint Wenceslas from 1707 has to be mentioned, which was commissioned to commemorate the former imperial reeve Václav Kosiště by his daughter Anna Marie who was married to Knight Vilém Rudolf Cikán of Čermná; the statue was erected on the gate standing next to St Nicholas's Church.<sup>33</sup> This sculpture is clear evidence of the "conspicuous consumption" when there is need of differentiating one's family from others when the town saw a noticeable decline.

As has been said, the town was probably spared during the last plague epidemic. Let us consider how the aforementioned local circumstances of the early decades of the eighteenth century affected the composition of the Marian plague column, or more properly, the Marian pillar. Situated in a lesser square, the pillar attracts attention due to its richness, which contradicts the town's characterization at first sight. Considering the surviving accounts, another contradiction arises: all that had been paid for the column was 1,321 fl.<sup>34</sup> This fact may be explained by the personality of the sculptor. The statue from 1723–1727<sup>35</sup> is ascribed primarily to Matyáš Bernard Braun (1684–1738) and also to his disciple Řehoř Thény, who died in Jaroměř, probably having moved here after his workshop in Žďár nad Sázavou had declined.<sup>36</sup> Braun's bond to Jaroměř had developed thanks to commissions in the nearby hospital in Kuks: in 1719 he got married to Marie

30 Detailed information on the complicated fortunes of the monument is found in MAXOVÁ – NEJEDLÝ – ZÁHRADNÍK, *Mariánské, trojiční a další světecké sloupy*, 106–108.

31 SLAVÍK, *Uměleckohistorické památky*, 79.

32 On the development of the cult of John of Nepomuk, see: VLNAS, *Jan Nepomucký, česká legenda*, 74–127.

33 A decorative stone relief of the town emblem, situated on the entrance side of the church gate, dates to the same year. ŠIMŮNEK, *Historický atlas měst České republiky*, sv. 31, 25.

34 State Regional Archives (hereinafter SOA) Zámrsrk, State District Archives (hereinafter SOKA) Náchod, Sběrka soudobé dokumentace, *Počť aneb Pořádnost na příjem a vydání od P. P. dobrodincův na vystavení statuí ku počťení blahoslavené Panny Marie Počťí. V královém věnném městě Jaroměří nad Labem léta Páně 1722. Vedený ode mě Jana Antonína Khůna*, the fund has not been described, no foliation. The records have been printed twice; first published as journal installments, cf. PAUL, *Počť aneb pořádnost na příjem a vydání*, 71–79, and later published in a separate book, see: PAUL, *Braunův Mariánský sloup*. As it is a trustworthy, verified transcription, the present study refers to this edition.

35 According to the catalogue of monuments of the National Heritage Institute, the statue was made in the years 1722–1726. "Sloup se sochou Panny Marie a sochami světců". Accessed 3 September 2020. <https://www.pamatkovykatolog.cz/sloup-se-sochou-panny-marie-a-sochami-svetcu-16304001>.

36 The architect is not known, but some characteristics of the work point at František Maxmilián Kaňka (1674–1766), who cooperated with Braun on columns in Valeč and Cítoluby. KOŘÁN, *Braunové*, 87.

Alžběta, daughter of a prominent citizen and councillor of Jaroměř, Karel Miselius.<sup>37</sup> As generally accepted, this may have been the reason Braun charged considerably less money than was usual; the commission for him and his assistants was merely 378 fl.<sup>38</sup>

A very interesting question remains as to how the financial sum for the artwork, whose foundation stone was laid in 1721,<sup>39</sup> was collected. We are well informed about it thanks to the records of incomes and expenses, kept by the mayor of Jaroměř and an apothecary, Jan Antonín Kühn,<sup>40</sup> who documented the income of 1,315 fl. 25 kr. 4½ denarii<sup>41</sup> for the years 1722–1729 and the expense of 1,321 fl. 30 kr. for the years 1723–1727. Obviously, the financial sum had been successfully assembled in a collection campaign.<sup>42</sup>

1723		fl.	kr.
22	Novembra francouz, kenzlony, nadevny Ja 4. dny 20 8 dny	52	
	Janubny, Wolframovy, Ja 5. dny	40	
	V. Janovy, Amulovy, miskan, romany, Ja 12		
1	Decembra Ja 12 dny, Ja 12 dny	29	
	Guiboisem, selevim, Ja 12 dny, Ja 12 dny	7	
	4 dny, Ja 12 dny, Ja 12 dny	16	
3	Ja 12 dny, Ja 12 dny, Ja 12 dny	13	
	Decembra Janu Braunovy	50	
4	Coranovy, Bagnery, Janu, Janu, Janu	8	
	Janu, Janu, Janu, Ja 12 dny	48	
	Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu		
	Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu	6	
	Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu	4	30
	Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu	2	6
	Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu	45	
	Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu	8	
	Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu		
	Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu, Janu	3	

Figure 2: Financial register of incomes and expenses related to the construction of the Jaroměř Marian column from 1723–1727

37 The prestigious position of the family is supported by the fact that according to the report in the dean’s register, Brauns’ wedding witnesses were a royal reeve, mayor, and another councillor. PAUL, *Braunův Mariánský sloup*, 4.

38 Ibidem, 5.

39 KNAPP, *Paměti královského věnného města*, 151.

40 On Kühn’s personality, see: ibidem, 171.

41 1 floren is a unit of currency (gulden); 1fl = 60 kr. (kretzer).

42 PAUL, *Braunův Mariánský sloup*, 26, 35.

The collected sum consisted not only of the town's finances but also of money gathered from individual contributors in 1722–1727. A donation was often motivated by the donator's personal piety and reverence to their patron, or by their own prestige, as exemplified by the town's financial officer and councillor Jakub Šmíd, who donated 26 fl. for the statue of Saint James. At that time, he had not owned a house in the square yet (he acquired the house No. 23 in 1729);<sup>43</sup> nevertheless, the statue of his patron was "built in the busiest place by the road" for his donation.<sup>44</sup> Štěpán Klepýtko donated 40 fl. "for the figure of Saint Stephen",<sup>45</sup> which was located opposite his house, No. 36. Václav Komínek bequeathed 40 fl. for a statue of Saint John the Baptist.<sup>46</sup> A prayer to all the saints mentioned for the protection of the town is inscribed in the cartouche on a metal plate: "Vrbi nostrae semper svccutite Divi" (Saints, always help our town). The message was supported with money collected in a money box in the church or with money collected from donators without any specific focus of their donation. The greatest sum of money documented was 100 fl., contributed by "His Majesty Prelate from Broumov".<sup>47</sup> The donator is likely to have been the art lover and benefactor Otmar Daniel Zinke, who was the abbot of the Břevnov-Broumov abbey in 1700–1738. We do not know whether he was asked by the Jaroměř inhabitants, or whether he had been informed of the project and his donation was his own initiative. Money was also collected from minor, anonymous donators. Therefore, there are sums which were repeatedly "collected from contributors and benefactors" by Josef Šmíd (also spelt as Šmidt or Smidt).<sup>48</sup> The accounts also provide evidence of collective contributions from guilds, e.g. the bakers' or hatmakers' guild;<sup>49</sup> additionally the collection was supported by the special tax ("šos"), most often by 50 fl.<sup>50</sup> It cannot be omitted that the creation of the Jaroměř pillar dedicated to the Immaculata, i.e., the aspect of the Virgin Mary's life emphasizing her Immaculate Conception, was supported by the town treasury's incomes from fines for moral misdemeanours and sexual delicts (rape, adultery, etc.). These ranged from 1 fl. to 40 fl.<sup>51</sup> Earlier exacted debts were also used to support the erection of the pillar.<sup>52</sup>

Considering the above-mentioned characterization of the town as well as the financial background, let us focus on the form of the Jaroměř pillar, as it is not accidental. Its height is 15.6 metres. The base of the pillar is a three-sided obelisk, symbolizing the Holy Trinity. On the balustrade there are statues of Saint Florian, the protector against fire, represented in the armour, with a guidon and a bucket of water being poured on a burning house;<sup>53</sup> Saint John of Nepomuk, whose confession secrecy is symbolized by

43 KNAPP, *Paměti královského věnného města*, 201.

44 PAUL, *Braunův Mariánský sloup*, 6: "postaven na nejfrekventovanějším místě při silnici".

45 *Ibidem*, 23: "na figuru sv. Štěpána".

46 *Ibidem*, 25.

47 *Ibidem*, 24: "J[eho] M[ilosti] pana praeláta z Broumova".

48 *Ibidem*, e.g. 23: "od dobrodincův kolektíroval".

49 *Ibidem*, 25.

50 E.g. *ibidem*, 24.

51 *Ibidem*, 23–26.

52 This is exemplified by the first recorded income relating to the debt of 8 fl. owed to Tobiáš Komínek; the debt was paid off by the widow Kateřina Miselius. *Ibidem*, 23.

53 It is notable how many towns in the modern era, including Jaroměř, were destroyed by fires. Unsurprisingly, another statue of this "very useful" saint was commissioned from Braun by the Jaroměř burghers; this time it



a padlock without a key; and most probably a statue of Saint Ignatius. The presence of the founder of the Society of Jesus or another Jesuit saint is sometimes interpreted as a friendly gesture towards the Jesuits from the nearby residence of Žireč;<sup>54</sup> the Jesuits, however, are not on the list of the donators.<sup>55</sup> In this context, it is worth noting that the long-term conflict between the inhabitants of Jaroměř and this Jesuit residence was documented in a report made in 1725; the Jaroměř representatives tended to complain about the Jesuits to administrative and governing officers, as the Jesuits did not pay the proper amount of tax ("šos") for their possessions in the village of Hořenice, which belonged to Jaroměř, or for levies, financial collections and other payments.<sup>56</sup> We are inclined to think that incorporating Jesuit saints may have resulted from the fashionable popularity of certain cults of that time and the social significance of the Jesuit order as such. It is also noteworthy that two of the then mayor Khün's sons became clergymen, one of them, Ludvík, entering the Jesuit order in 1735. Similarly, two sons of the mayor František Bleiweis became Jesuit priests; Jan Bleiweis was the deputy of the Bohemian Jesuit province at the imperial court. Josef Henzelius, a native of Jaroměř, was a custodian of the Jesuit college in Opava.<sup>57</sup>

Going back to the statue of the Jesuit saint, we can see a figure with a mystic look and eyes fixed to the heaven, holding in his left hand a crucifix made of a log and decorated with lilies, and in his right hand an oval with symbols of the eucharist – a chalice with the host ornate with letters JHS. While the eucharist symbols and the inscription JHS are frequent attributes of Saint Ignatius, the crucifix suggests this figure may be Saint Francis Xavier. However, based on the representation of the saint's face, Ivo Kořán identifies the statue with this Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier.<sup>58</sup>

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was a life-sized wood carving displayed in the town church; unfortunately, the statue has not survived. KOŘÁN, *Braunové*, 88. On iconography of Saint Florian, cf. BRAUNFELS, *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie* (hereinafter LCI), Bd. 6., 254–259.

54 Their disputes with Braun's "employer" F. A. Špork need not be recalled. Cf. especially PREISS, *František Antonín Špork*, 385 and following pages.

55 They are also recorded as investors in Baroque sculptures, e.g., a statue of Saint Francis Xavier and a sculptural group of Saint Florian, works of Jiří František Pacák's workshop from Litomyšl, were situated around their Baroque residence in Žireč. "Sousoší sv. Floriána". Accessed 9 September 2020. <https://pamatkovykatalog.cz/sousosi-sv-floriana-2156752>. "Socha sv. Františka Xaverského". Accessed 5 September 2020. <https://pamatkovykatalog.cz/pravni-ochrana/socha-sv-frantiska-xaverskeho-138441>.

56 KNAPP, *Paměti královského věnného města*, 150–152.

57 Ibidem, 172–173. A lot of clergymen were recruited from burghers' families in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sometimes it was even several siblings from this social group. Cf. BŮŽEK, *Společnost českých zemí*, 105, 115.

58 KOŘÁN, *Braunové*, 88. Other authors presume the statue represents Saint Ignatius. MAXOVÁ – NEJEDLÝ – ZAHRADNÍK, *Mariánské, trojiční a další světecké sloupy*, 76, 78.



Figure 3: Saint Ignatius or Saint Francis Xavier on the Jaroměř pillar (photo by Petr Polehla)

The plinth of the pillar is decorated with statues of Saint John the Baptist, Saint Stephen and Saint James, as a pilgrim holding a staff, to whom the church in the suburb of Jaroměř has been dedicated since the fourteenth century.<sup>59</sup> We are not of the same opinion as Ivo Kořán that the statues of Saint James, Stephen and John the Baptist were selected "in the free judgement of the municipal council".<sup>60</sup> The cult of Saint James had had a long tradition in the town and the church dedicated to the saint and the suburb named after him is a persuasive argument thereof (the other suburb has been called the Prague suburb since the end of the sixteenth century).<sup>61</sup> What further justifies this theory about the cult of the patron saint of pilgrims is the fact that the town was

59 Saint John the Baptist is depicted in a camel fur. At his feet there is a lamb – a symbol of Jesus Christ, who John the Baptist pointed at, while baptising in the river of Jordan, saying: "Behold! The Lamb of God". Saint Stephen, who is said to have seen the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7, 56), is gazing up and holding a book in his left hand, indicating his wisdom (Acts 6, 10). There are three stones laid on the book – the instrument of his martyrdom and his frequent attribute. ROYT, *Slovník biblické ikonografie*, 278–279.

60 KOŘÁN, *Braunové*, 88: "podle volného úsudku městské rady".

61 KNAPP, *Paměti královského věnného města*, 85.

founded on a trade route. The choice of Saint Stephen may have been influenced by the financial donation from the owner of the Jezviny homestead, Jan Štěpán Klepýtko,<sup>62</sup> whose contribution of 40 fl. ranked among the highest contributions from private persons. V. Paul states that "there are some among the donators who requested that statues of certain saints be built to their patron saints' veneration"; and this applied to Klepýtko.<sup>63</sup> However, it is also important to remark that the column from 1686 had already featured Saint Florian, John the Baptist and John of Nepomuk (leaving the Virgin Mary aside for now). This fact may have influenced the composition of the pillar of Jaroměř. The belief that the town had been protected against unfavourable events thanks to these saints may have been deeply rooted. What remains to be added is that there is another statue of Saint John of Nepomuk in St James's suburb, made in the high-Baroque style, which is ascribed either to the aforementioned Řehoř Thény or to the Litomyšl workshop of Jiří František Pacák (probably 1670–1742).<sup>64</sup> The statue is another example of the popularity of the Nepomuk cult, against the background of the minor town of Jaroměř.

The predominant topic of the pillar is the cult of the Virgin Mary; the central statue represents the Immaculata, the aspect of Mary's life related to her Immaculate Conception. Noteworthy in this context is the conflicting data at the beginning and at the end of the accounts. The heading reads that the statue was built "to the veneration of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary"; nevertheless, at the end of the accounts it is declared that "the statue to the veneration of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary" was consecrated on 8 December 1727.<sup>65</sup> The memorial book of the deanery, founded more than a hundred years later (in 1840), indicates that it was a "colossus Immaculatae Conceptionis Beatissimae Virginis Mariae".<sup>66</sup> This discrepancy reflects the inconsistency of the Mariological terminology and the differing opinions regarding the Marian cult. The dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, i.e., the future Mother of God having been protected from the original sin, was not declared by the Church until 1854. The Assumption of the Virgin Mary was dogmatically defined as late as 1950, but it was not accompanied by so many controversies in the period in question.<sup>67</sup> The inscription on the metal plate on the front side of the pillar does not specify the devotion either. It says that the pillar was erected to express the town's piety to the Mother of God ("pietas regiae urbis nostrae in Deiparam"). Above the Latin inscription there is another inscription on the metal plate, reading "*Virgo et Mater Dei casta*", which indicates her virginity and motherhood, not the fact that she was protected from the original sin.

62 Ibidem, 228.

63 PAUL, *Braunův Mariánský sloup*, 5: "mezi dárci nalézají se někteří, kteří vyžádali si ke cti svých patronů sochy určitých svatých".

64 On the activity of Jiří František Pacák, cf. 13, 14, 17, 19.

65 PAUL, *Braunův Mariánský sloup*, 23, 35: "ku počtění blahoslavené Panny Marie Početí" and "statuí ku počtění blahoslavené Panny Marie Nanebevzetí".

66 Quoted from MAXOVÁ – NEJEDLÝ – ZAHRADNÍK, *Mariánské, trojiční a další světecké sloupy*, 78: "kolos Immaculatae Conceptionis Beatissimae Virginis Mariae".

67 Focusing only on the post-Tridentine era, the polemic on the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary was very lively not only between the Catholics and Protestants, but also within the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, Marian columns attest to the cult of the Immaculate Conception in Bohemia long before the dogma was officially declared. ROYT, *Obraz a kult*, 214–221. On both Marian dogmas, see: *Maria* in: SALAJKA, *Orientační teologický slovník*, 91–92.

There are three more events from the life of the Blessed Mary, depicted on the reliefs of the plinth: Visitation of the Virgin Mary,<sup>68</sup> Presentation of Jesus at the Temple,<sup>69</sup> and Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Above the third of these there is an elderly female figure, with a baby carrying a cross. Some authors identify it as an allegory of Faith,<sup>70</sup> which is challenged by I. Kořán; he interprets it as Saint Anne, Mary's mother.<sup>71</sup> A Marian theme is also present on the relief representing the Holy Family. The Virgin Mary is relaxing under a tree and Saint Joseph is holding a staff, which suggest that this is probably the Holy Family on their flight into Egypt,<sup>72</sup> although the obligatory donkey is missing, as well as the angels<sup>73</sup> supporting the Holy Family.<sup>74</sup>



Figure 4: The statue of an allegory of Faith or Saint Anne, Mary's mother, on the Jaroměř pillar (photo by Petr Polehla)

68 The event referred to is the Virgin Mary's visit to her relative Elizabeth, who was also pregnant, expecting the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1, 39–45).

69 The event is named, for example, the Circumcision of Jesus or Presentation of Jesus at the Temple. All titles reflect the fact that Jesus was brought to the temple, a sacrifice was offered for him, and he was circumcised and presented to the local community of believers. Luke 2, 22–24.

70 PAUL, *Braunův Mariánský sloup*, 11.

71 KOŘÁN, *Braunové*, 88.

72 Ivo Kořán states that it is the Holy Family. Ibidem, 87. Other authors mention the flight into Egypt, cf. MAXOVÁ – NEJEDLÝ – ZAHRADNÍK, *Mariánské, trojiční a další světecké sloupy*, 78.

73 There are two angels; however, they rather complement the dove descending from the heavens, symbolizing the Holy Spirit.

74 ROYT, *Slovník biblické ikonografie*, 300–301.

Contrary to the Holy Family, the second relief on the plinth features an incomplete family where daughters are forced by their father (and by their misery) to earn money through prostitution. This is a relief representing Saint Nicholas. As has been noted, Saint Nicholas has a great significance in Jaroměř as the main church is dedicated to him. Nicholas is worshipped as an assistant who helps with many problems, which stems from the rich tradition of legends. His generosity, which is recalled in the tradition of giving presents on the eve of Saint Nicholas's feast even today, proceeds from the story when Saint Nicholas secretly gave presents to three girls earning their living through prostitution. This story is presented on the pillar: there is a man dressed as a bishop, holding a book in one hand and handing apples to the girls sleeping. It is the apples that Saint Nicholas is often depicted with; the golden apples developed from three golden balls. The *Legenda aurea*, the most frequently read medieval hagiographical text, mentions three nuggets of gold (*masa aurei*) which Saint Nicholas threw as a present through the window of the house where the girls were living with their father.<sup>75</sup> According to the legend, the saint also resurrected three babies who had been murdered and brined in a barrel by a cruel innkeeper. Therefore, children (sometimes located in a barrel) are an attribute of Saint Nicholas, too. However, we suppose that it is significant for a town situated at that time on the confluence of two rivers (and with another river flowing nearby) that Saint Nicholas is also the patron saint of sailors (according to legends, he would help sailors in need)<sup>76</sup> and other professions connected with water – bargees, raftsmen, fishermen and millers – and also of people travelling, especially on water. He is also worshipped as a protector against the danger of flooding.<sup>77</sup> Also noteworthy is the fact that in the dean's church in Jaroměř the main altar is decorated with a painting of Saint Nicholas, which is ascribed to the Baroque painter Petr Brandl (1668–1735); if Brandl really was the author, the painting cannot be taken as an indicator of the town's prosperity at that time.<sup>78</sup>

75 In the representation of the saint, the golden balls or apples are sometimes replaced with bags of money. LCI, Bd. 8., 50.

76 VORAGINE, *Legenda aurea*, 70–76.

77 LCI, Bd. 8, 46–58.

78 "Kostel sv. Mikuláše". Accessed 12 September 2020. <https://pamatkovykatolog.cz/kostel-sv-mikulase-2146806>.





Figure 5: The relief representing Saint Nicholas on the Jaroměř pillar (photo by Petr Polehla)

The pillar of Jaroměř, decorated with an array of popular saints, literally became a place of cult very early in its existence. Again, the symbolic form of communication influencing the population in later decades may be highlighted. On feast days of the saints, prayers and services were held at the pillar, sometimes accompanied with music, e.g., on the feast days of Saints Florian, James and John of Nepomuk; there are also reports on Saturday worship and gathering before Marian feast days.<sup>79</sup> The sculptural artefact and its close vicinity were used as a place of mutual prayer and religious gatherings, too, not exclusively serving private prayers. By no means were they just a medium of self-representation for the town and its representatives and donators from the milieu of inhabitants; we also suppose a family tradition was formed earlier, and spread orally and possibly by means of artefacts in burghers' homes.<sup>80</sup> Nor does

79 MAXOVÁ – NEJEDLÝ – ZAHRADNÍK, *Mariánské, trojiční a další světecké sloupy*, 79.

80 Here arise opportunities for research into the popularity of the saints in question in burghers' families in Jaroměř, based on surviving artworks or written sources.

the celebration of the Empress, a worldly patron of the town, come to the foreground. Together with the inscription mentioning the town inhabitants' piety as an incentive for building the pillar, on the metal plate on the front side there is a very brief note about the pillar having been built under Emperor Charles VI and Queen Elizabeth ("Carolo VI et regina Elisabetha regnante").<sup>81</sup>

Let us add that the sculptures on the Jaroměř pillar have recently been replaced with copies and deposited in Josefov lapidarium (Bastion 1). A valuable Baroque tombstone of a Weeping Woman, made in 1730 by M. B. Braun for his deceased mother-in-law Anna Miselius, has also been replaced with a replica. In the period in question, it used to be located in the cemetery at St James's Church. Setting such a valuable artefact in Jaroměř depended on the personality of the sculptor and his personal bond with a local family.<sup>82</sup> This artwork, which was unique in the context of the town's history, displays the need to differentiate the town from others.

In conclusion, a question can be formulated regarding whether the town of Jaroměř would have had a Marian pillar erected (and when it would have been built and what it would have looked like), if one of the burghers' daughters had not married one of the main sculptors. In fact, Jaroměř was – together with the nearby town of Dvůr Králové, which also possessed a small manor – one of the smallest and least significant East-Bohemian dowry towns. The foundation stone to the Marian column in Dvůr was not laid until 1753.<sup>83</sup>

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81 There are scarce inscriptions on the monument. Apart from the inscriptions mentioned, there is a later inscription below Saint Florian's statue, "Renovated A.D. 1883".

82 A copy of the tombstone is situated at the Jaroměř cemetery, which was founded in 1888 after Saint James's cemetery had been closed. The original can be found in the Museum of Jaroměř. "Sochy – hřbitovní soubor včetně náhrobků". Accessed 4 September 2020. <https://pamatkovykatalog.cz/sochy-hrbitovni-soubor-vcetne-nahrobku-2147440>.

83 "Sloup se sousoším – Mariánský sloup". Accessed 4 September 2020.

<https://www.pamatkovykatalog.cz/sloup-se-sousosim-mariansky-sloup-2279138>. VITÁK, *Dějiny královského věnného města*, 51, 156.

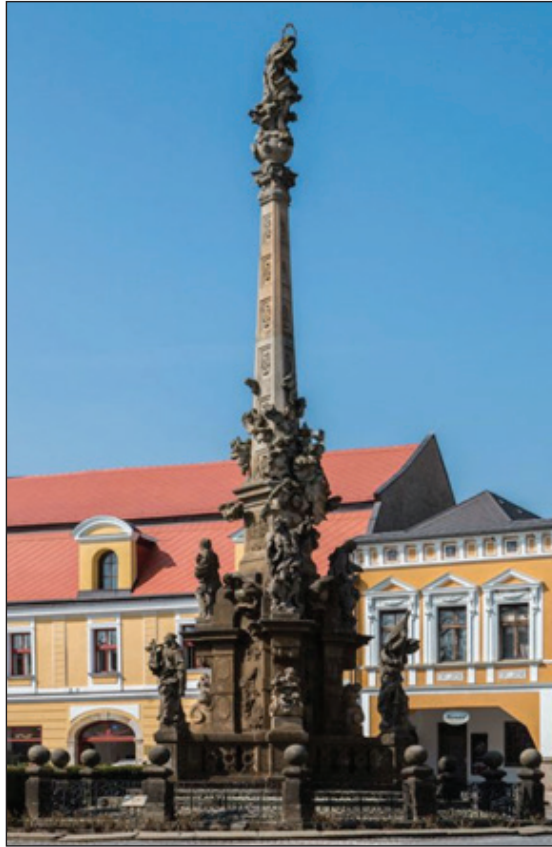


Figure 6: The pillar of Jaroměř from 1723–1727<sup>84</sup>

### The royal dowry town of Polička and its obelisk from 1727–1731

Like Jaroměř and Dvůr Králové, Polička also used to be one of the smallest and least significant East-Bohemian royal dowry towns. This characteristic held absolutely true until the end of the Thirty Years' War. The town was built on a trade route near the border with Moravia, but the fact that the locality was not inhabited in the pre-urban era indicates unfavourable natural conditions, reflected in the poor agricultural production of the region over centuries. The reason was the relatively high altitude of 555m above sea level. Naturally, the adverse conditions affected the specialization of the local crafts and the possibility of trade.<sup>85</sup>

84 "Památky ve městě – mariánský sloup". Accessed 11 September 2020. <https://www.jaromer-josefov.cz/volny-cas/pamatky-ve-meste/mariansky-sloup-1/>.

85 The most significant recent works on the history of Polička include RŮŽIČKA – KRUŠINA, *Dějiny města Poličky I*. JUNEK – KONEČNÝ, *Dějiny města Poličky*. ŠIMŮNEK, *Historický atlas měst České republiky*, sv. 30.

A particular period of almost a hundred years, traditionally labelled as the era preceding the battle at the White Mountain (1526–1620), was not an easy period for Polička and its inhabitants: due to the social changes caused by the development of the nearby aristocratic manor estates, the number of marketing places, especially where Polička beer was sold, diminished; besides, the town and its inhabitants, subjects of increasing taxation, were affected fatally by fires several times. The municipal treasury had to face financial problems repeatedly, which was intensified by the confiscation of land property as a result of the anti-Habsburg resistance in 1547. The town manor had been based on villages paying the tax called "šos". In 1545 the villages were transformed into allodial villages. Luckily, the town managed to regain them. Some villages belonging to Jaroměř, which were situated in fertile lowlands, attracted the attention of aristocratic entrepreneurs, whereas the manor of Polička itself was left unnoticed.<sup>86</sup> The town, with its two pertaining suburbs (the Upper and the Lower suburbs), later purchased other land property, despite the great indebtedness of the municipal treasury and the financial burden carried by the inhabitants. Gradually the town succeeded in building a middle-sized manor, as seen in the context of royal towns (incorporating the complete villages of Borová, Kamenec, Makov, Modřec, Nedvězí, Oldřiš, Radiměř, Sádek, Sedlišťe, Telecí, Trhonice and parts of Korouhev, (Pustá) Rybná, Široký Důl and Újezdec).<sup>87</sup> The temporary boom connected with developing textile production did not prove able to revive the town, whose landmark remained the Gothic Church of St James. All of that was reflected in the cultural climate. As a consequence of the boom, another church was built in 1572–1576 – the filial Church of St Michael Archangel, with a Gothic exterior, but – already – a Renaissance interior. A new, larger cemetery was founded around the church, which may be considered to be a signal of the growing number of citizens; the old cemetery at St James's Church ceased to exist after that.<sup>88</sup>

86 Cf. JUNEK – KONEČNÝ, *Dějiny města Poličky*, 80–88.

87 Ibidem, 102–104. VOJTÍŠKOVÁ, Jana. Map No. 29: The development of the land property of Polička up to 1848. In: ŠIMŮNEK, *Historický atlas měst České republiky*, sv 30, map leaf no. 24.

88 JUNEK – KONEČNÝ, *Dějiny města Poličky*, 93–98.

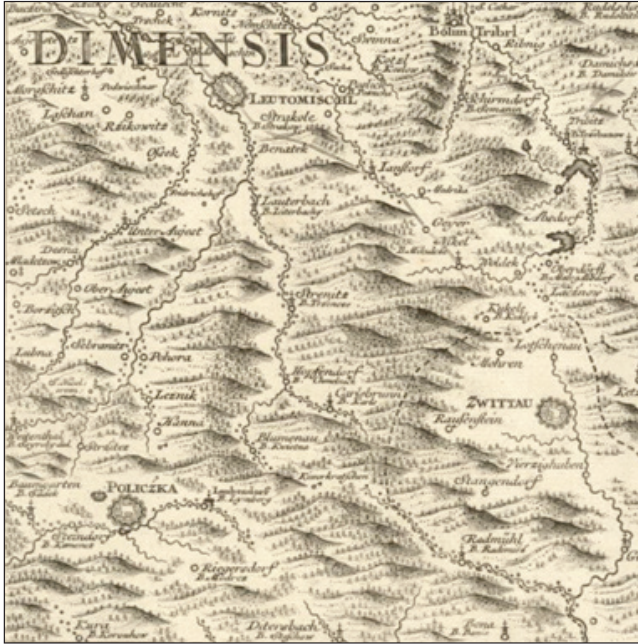


Figure 7: A section from Müller's map of Bohemia from 1720, showing the royal dowry town of Polička and the nearby liege town of Litomyšl in the vicinity of the border with Moravia<sup>89</sup>

In 1613, the town, especially the part surrounded by town walls, was substantially affected by a huge fire. One of the rebellious non-Catholic towns, Polička entered the Thirty Years' War with a great number of problems, which resulted in a further deepening of the financial crisis of the town and its inhabitants and the destruction of town buildings. The records of the period describe an almost depopulated town looking like a rubbish heap, where even soldiers passing through did not want to stay. The war, during which the town manor was temporarily confiscated, affected other royal towns as well, but Polička's inhabitants fell into misery much faster.<sup>90</sup>

The town remained a building site for decades after the war. However, anyone who expected the town burghers to be so disconsolate due to their miserable fate that they could not regain an ordinary life in a peripheral, below-average royal town would be mistaken. The square, not covering a large area before this time, and reflecting the significance of the locality in the Middle Ages and early modern times, attests to an unusual boom which was sophisticatedly reflected in the first half of the eighteenth century in an impressive Baroque composition decorating the public space. Whereas most of the Baroque town buildings were severely damaged and some of them completely destroyed by the great fire of 1845, the unique Baroque composition survived, albeit

89 "Müllerova mapa Čech". Accessed 11 September 2020.  
[http://oldmaps.geolab.cz/map\\_viewer.pl?lang=cs&map\\_root=mul&map\\_region=ce&map\\_list=c015](http://oldmaps.geolab.cz/map_viewer.pl?lang=cs&map_root=mul&map_region=ce&map_list=c015).

90 Ibidem, 106, 117–136.



with minor damage.<sup>91</sup> And it is these Baroque artefacts especially, with the Marian column dominating, that are significant examples of “conspicuous consumption” – the attempt to differentiate Polička from other Bohemian royal towns of the first half of the eighteenth century. Their communicative intention is highly noticeable.<sup>92</sup>

Following the building activity chronologically, two Baroque statues should be mentioned: made in 1727 by Jiří František Pacák’s stonemason’s workshop in Litomyšl, they were created to decorate two fountains<sup>93</sup> that served as sources of drinking water in front of the medieval town hall. The statue of Saint George, which cost 100 fl., paid by the town, was more expensive; the statue of Saint Michael Archangel cost 62 fl.<sup>94</sup> The latter was located on a gate pillar of the suburban cemetery in 1739–1940.<sup>95</sup> Financially supported by a councillor’s son, Václav Tichý, a statue of Saint John of Nepomuk was built by the same stonemason’s workshop in 1727, two years ahead of the canonization of the saint; its location will be mentioned later.<sup>96</sup> In 1727–1731 Pacák’s workshop created a Marian obelisk for the town of Polička, as a thanksgiving for the protection of the town from the plague epidemic of 1713–1715. The expenses recorded are 6,289 fl. 37 kr. and they significantly exceed other towns’ expenses for similar works of art.<sup>97</sup> For a more precise idea, this sum would correspond to 10-year levies from the subjects of Polička.<sup>98</sup> The sum was even comparable to the costs of the reconstruction of the town hall in 1733–1740 (adaptations of the interior took three more years), which resulted in the imposing, two-storey building of a Baroque palace town hall with a gambrel roof and a tower, situated in the middle of the rather small square. As the construction plans have not been found, it remains unanswered who the designer was: authors of recent literature speculate especially about F. Benedikt Klíčník, a master builder from Brno, supervising the construction in 1739–1740, or Carlo Antonio Canevalle (1680–1740) with regards to the mention of “the Canivalle debt” in the town accounts of 1737; some authors, however, ascribe the project of the town hall as well as the whole Baroque composition to the imperial architect František Maxmilián Kaňka (1674–1766).<sup>99</sup> Finally, the above-mentioned statue of Saint John of Nepomuk was situated at the southern side of the town hall.

The facts mentioned adumbrate that the burghers of Polička, unlike those of Jaroměř, did not only overcome their problems but they also managed to gather considerable wealth, which was reflected in the Baroque composition of a public space of great artistic value. For example, in an extant request for a financial support

91 Ibidem, 247–251. The fire damaged part of the Baroque town hall. For more about the town hall, see below.

92 Today it is impossible to find in the archival inventory the sources on which the historiography of Polička based the information on the expenses. (We would like to thank Michal Severa and Stanislav Konečný from the State District Archives in Svitavy, based in Litomyšl, for the verification.)

93 In 1839 the fountains were replaced with new ones. “Kašna se sochou sv. Jiří”. Accessed 23 September 2020. <https://pamatkovykatalog.cz/kasna-se-sochou-sv-jiri-14000802>; <https://pamatkovykatalog.cz/kasna-se-sochou-sv-michaela-archandela-14000929>.

94 JUNEK, *Soupis památek historických*, 90. JUNEK – KONEČNÝ, *Dějiny města Poličky*, 171.

95 “Kašna se sochou sv. Michaela Archanděla”. Accessed 23 September 2020. <https://pamatkovykatalog.cz/kasna-se-sochou-sv-michaela-archandela-14000929>.

96 JUNEK, *Polička. Mariánský obelisk*, 6.

97 JUNEK – KONEČNÝ, *Dějiny města Poličky*, 157. MAXOVÁ et al. *Mariánské, trojiční a další světecké sloupy*, 48. WIRTH, *Soupis památek*, 87.

98 JUNEK, *Polička. Mariánský obelisk*, 8.

99 JUNEK – KONEČNÝ, *Dějiny města Poličky*, 157–158.

for the construction of the town hall, which was addressed to Queen Elizabeth Kristine (1691–1750), the citizens of Polička represent their town as a poor one, referring to “the Swedish war” when the town hall was ruined, mentioning high levies supporting the army, and demanding sustenance of the clergy and other costs. However, obviously, this rhetoric was chosen in an attempt to gain money from the patron of the town. It is not clear whether she satisfied the requirements.<sup>100</sup> In fact, the burghers, especially the owners of 113 houses with the brewing right, and to a lesser extent also the owners of houses built later and lacking the brewing right, lived their “golden age”, as this period of Polička’s history, covering the span of years 1700–1775, was called by a Polička native and the first local historian Antonín Hájek (1791–1863).<sup>101</sup>

What was the ground-breaking event that caused a town of a minor size and lesser importance, seriously affected by war hardships, to make such extraordinary economic progress that this became evident in the public space by means of Baroque art? The answer should be sought in the first post-war generations, who were able to find a source of cheap labour and secure profit thanks to their tenacity. The inhabitants of Polička managed to utilize the work potential of their liege villages and transformed the manor into a corvée manor (“robotní panství”), following the example of the nobility.<sup>102</sup> As early as 1654 there was just one desolate homestead out of the total number of 362. According to the manorial lords’ regulations, the husbandmen were obliged to cultivate the fields deserted by runaway non-Catholic farmers. Besides the usual statute labour and financial obligations and the duties of harvest contributions, all of which were gradually increasing, the serfs had to process flax yarn for the town nobility; however, they were not allowed to trade it freely. They were also banned from producing woven fabric. One of the statute labour duties was transporting salt from Austrian salt mines to the storehouse in Polička. The town’s economy was based on the brewery, town farmsteads and forests, whose benefits were rather high despite the backward machinery, as most of the work was done by the subjects.<sup>103</sup> Heavy duties and the plague epidemic led to long-term dissatisfaction that broke out in the Polička manor in 1680.<sup>104</sup> The number of the newly settled families of serfs rose to 530 at the end of the century; several new settlements were founded in the surroundings, e.g., Landráty near the village of Telecí. With new inhabitants coming, the number of less wealthy, or even poor families, especially cotters’ (“chalupník”) or husbandmen’s lodgers’ (“podruh”) families, was growing. According to surviving reports, the burghers behaved disdainfully towards their subjects. This is another reason that the Polička town hall resembles a mansion, as it was the seat of the aristocratic administration.<sup>105</sup> It presents another example of communication mediated through the Baroque building.

However, another important fact regarding the Polička subjects should be mentioned. Although the town presented itself as a Catholic one, surrounding villages continued to be also inhabited by non-Catholics. Therefore, it may be agreed that the rich sculpture decoration presented in the Polička square was to demonstrate an

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100 Ibidem, 154.

101 HÁJEK, *Královské město Polička*, 45.

102 The first to discuss the topic in detail is RŮŽIČKA – KRUŠINA, *Dějiny města Poličky I.*, 68 nn.

103 JUNEK – KONEČNÝ, *Dějiny města Poličky*, 151–152.

104 Ibidem, 138–140.

105 Ibidem, 152–153.

adherence to Catholicism in an area with a strong non-Catholic tradition.<sup>106</sup> Let us focus closely on the works of the Baroque sculpture which also show off the wealth of the town and its inhabitants endowed with the brewing right.

The central point of the whole composition of the Baroque sculpture artefacts is the Marian monument, the base of which is a three-sided obelisk, symbolizing the Holy Trinity. It is richly segmented and decorated with sculptures of saints and angels along all the height of 20 metres. On the upper storeys, it is veiled by clouds. On the corner pillars are the parents of the Virgin Mary – Saints Joachim and Ann – and Mary’s fiancé, Saint Joseph. The iconographical programme starts with the Virgin Mary’s family, referring to her impeccability: the Immaculate Conception in Saint Ann’s womb, but also the Immaculate Conception of Jesus Christ, represented by the statue of Saint Joseph, holding a lily, an attribute of chastity, in the right hand; unfortunately, the lily has not survived.<sup>107</sup>



Figure 8: Polička obelisk from 1727–1731 and the town hall as a part of the Baroque-composed public space (photo by Miroslav Beneš)

<sup>106</sup> JUNEK, *Polička. Mariánský obelisk*, 4. In *Bohemia plague columns are sometimes labelled monuments of anti-reformation*. HERSCHE, *Muße und Verschwendung*, 564.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibidem*, 7, 13.

In the niches of the first storey, there are statues of Saints Wenceslas, Vitus and Florian. The statue of the most significant patron saint of the country and the heir of Bohemia, Saint Wenceslas, is situated symbolically opposite the entrance to the town hall. The saint is depicted in armour, with a prince's cap and a guidon. The palladium of Stará Boleslav is hung on his chest, a symbol of Marian protection of Bohemia. The inscription referring to the ruling authority, the secular patron, heiress and the lady of the town, Bohemian Queen and Empress Elizabeth Kristine, is located symbolically under his statue. Polička as a royal dowry town is presented on a cartouche under the statue of Saint Vitus, with a brief inscription "Me ex voto erigii ivssit Policzka Vrbs dotalis". The largest cartouche celebrates the greatest female ruler, the Queen of Heaven and Earth, the Blessed Virgin Mary. Another patron saint of the country, Saint Vitus, with the attribute of a rooster, has enjoyed a great reverence since the early Middle Ages, and one of the important centres of the cult of this native of Sicily has been Prague. He is venerated as a protector against epilepsy, and also against lightning.<sup>108</sup> A general's staff in his hand was probably added later.<sup>109</sup> Saint Florian's statue, an integral part of many smaller or larger sculptures in town and village squares is represented traditionally as an armoured saint pouring water from a bucket onto a burning house.<sup>110</sup> It is noteworthy that Polička had suffered several large fires; that is why the protector against fire is given a place of honour on the column on the same storey as the patron saints of the country.

The second storey was reserved for anti-plague patrons – Saints Sebastian,<sup>111</sup> Roch<sup>112</sup> and Charles Borromeo.<sup>113</sup> All of them are represented in accordance with the iconographical canon; Saint Sebastian's body is stabbed with arrows, Saint Roch is depicted as a pilgrim with a dog and Saint Charles Borromeo is wearing a cardinal hat. All of the three saints were also incorporated in the later decoration of the church in the 1730s; this decoration, however, was destroyed together with most of the other church decoration by the fire of 1845. On an art print from 1847, picturing the presbytery before the fire, we can see the statue of Saint Sebastian tied to a stake and the statue of Saint Roch with a dog licking a wound on his leg. The statues were situated on the sides of the altar of Saint Charles. On the opposite side of the presbytery there is an altar of Saint John of Nepomuk, who is also featured on the obelisk. With regards to the above-mentioned solitary statue of the saint from 1727, it is evident that Saint John of Nepomuk was a very popular saint among the Catholics living in Polička; he was, however, a thorn in the side of non-Catholics, who disseminated pamphlets against

108 LCI, Bd. 8, 579–583.

109 JUNEK, *Polička. Mariánský obelisk*, 13.

110 LCI, Bd. 6, 259–254.

111 Saint Sebastian was martyred with the arrows of Numid archers at Emperor Diocletian's direct command. That is why he is usually depicted with arrows stuck in his body. LCI, Bd. 8, 318–324.

112 Saint Roch is a medieval plague patron saint. According to a legend, he healed a lot of people from plague, he himself being infected. The suffering Roch, living in isolation, was brought food by a dog, which often accompanies him on statues or paintings. He is also depicted as a pilgrim with a hat and a staff or as a man showing plague ulcers on his body. *Ibidem*, 276–278.

113 Archbishop of Milan and also a cardinal, Charles Borromeo became renowned in many respects. The reason he is worshipped as a patron saint against plague is that he risked his life fighting against the plague epidemic in Milan in 1576–1578 and helping the ill. He introduced very effective measures and proved to be a skilled organizer. He pushed through a strict hygienic regime, including using available disinfectants and isolation of the infected; he also built hospitals and organized general charitable support. GIORGI, *Bildlexikon der Kunst*, 195–197.

him.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, in the church he is surrounded by Bohemian Saints Procopius and Vojtěch (Adalbert), who are not present on the obelisk.<sup>115</sup> Saint James,<sup>116</sup> the patron of the church and town, is also missing. The main altar of the church dedicated to the saint was completed in 1752, being a work of František Pacák, the son of Jiří František Pacák, and a Polička joiner, František Weinlich. The artistic heritage of the local master attests to the rising level of local culture.<sup>117</sup>

Marian topics are expanded on the cartouches on the second storey of the obelisk. The reliefs are equipped with inscriptions, which make it easier to identify and interpret the saints. It is also the Trinity topic that is repeated as the relation of the Virgin Mary to the three Divine persons. The first relief represents the Virgin Mary as the Daughter of God the Father (*Filia Dei Patris*); the second one depicts her as the Mother of God's Son (*Mater Dei Filii*) – she is holding Baby Jesus in her hands; and the third relief features her as a Fiancée of the Holy Spirit (*Sponsa Spiritus Sancti*). This cartouche depicts the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary: Mary is praying over a book or meditating on the Word of God; there is also an angel with a lily and the Holy Spirit descending from the Heaven as a dove.<sup>118</sup>

The obelisk culminates with the statue of the Virgin Mary, represented as the Immaculata; in terms of iconography, it contains all the necessary attributes – the moon under her feet, twelve stars around her head and the globe twined by a serpent, the head of which is pressed on by one foot of the Immaculata, who is being elevated by angels. There is also an apple in the serpent's (i.e. the devil's) mouth, referring to the original sin. Mary, the new Eve, was prevented from committing the sin. It is noteworthy in this context that a local dean reported in the correspondence to the archbishop's consistory in Prague that the aim of the artwork was to display the statue for public worship, so that the cult of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary,<sup>119</sup> or Immaculata,<sup>120</sup> might increase. This report, presented in the historiography of Polička, proves the communicative intention, which was, from the point of view of the dean, embodied in the artefacts.

The town council considered the obelisk as something extraordinary and as a medium of the town's self-representation, and this is evident from the fact that they had a copper engraving, depicting the monument, made by Michael Rentz (1698–1758), an engraver of Count Špork. They approached him in 1732. This act testifies to the high ambition of the Polička town representation, as Rentz was one of the most prominent

114 JUNEK, *Polička. Mariánský obelisk*, 6.

115 A reprint of the graphic engraving is published e.g. in: BORSKÝ – JUNEK – MUCHOVÁ, *Polička. Kostel sv. Jakuba*, 20.

116 The dedication to this saint is typical of towns founded during the colonization in the thirteenth century. The colonizers leaving their country may have considered themselves as pilgrims whose patron saint is Saint James. GIORGI, *Bildlexikon der Kunst*, 155–158.

117 JUNEK – KONEČNÝ, *Dějiny města Poličky*, 177.

118 This may account for the false interpretation of the other two cartouches as the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin Mary, which complement the theme of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary. *Ibidem*, 177.

119 The problems of the cult of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary have been mentioned above (footnote no. 68). A lot of clergymen and laymen associated with various communities and sodalities were obliged to defend and promote this teaching. The Immaculate Conception was venerated by the House of Habsburg (*pietas Austriaca*) and also had an anti-reformation aspect. ROYT, *Obraz a kult*, 218.

120 JUNEK, *Polička. Mariánský obelisk*, 8.



masters of the art<sup>121</sup> and obviously, he was not a cheap one. What is more, it was not easy to persuade the busy artist to accept the commission. In the end, Rentz did not undertake to make the engraving until June 1738. In his letter, he spoke highly of the Polička obelisk: "I cannot tell where a more splendid monument – apart from the Trinity statue in Teplice – could be seen all over the Bohemian Kingdom; I will not spare my diligence to complete it and I will make any effort to pay tribute with God's help by means of another art form." The sum of 200 fl. for engraving and expected 20 fl. for buying the copper plate was enormous, but Rentz defended it, saying: "By no means is the price of 200 fl., which I fixed earlier, too high or excessive".<sup>122</sup>

Nevertheless, the town councillors were willing to pay the sum, exceeding the costs of the statues for the fountains, in order to spread word of the town's glory – and its token of loyalty to the imperial court and the Church – far and wide. They needed it to be finished on time so that a print could be made as a birthday present for Empress Elizabeth Kristine. However, it was not until 1742 that the artefact was delivered to Polička, and the size was extraordinary: the plate measured 111 x 52 cm and the size of the print was 109 x 49.5 cm.<sup>123</sup> Due to the excessive size of the prints, the town had another plate engraved – a smaller one measuring 70 x 45.5 cm. It cost 122 fl. and it was not just a reduced copy of the original plate.<sup>124</sup>

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121 ROYT, *Obraz a kult*, 294. ŠERÝCH, *Michael Rentz*, 267.

122 SOA Zámorsk, SOkA Svitavy, Archiv města Polička II, box. 254, inv. no. 609.

123 The plate is part of the exposition of the Town Museum and Gallery of Polička nowadays.

124 ŠERÝCH, *Michael Rentz*, 339–340.

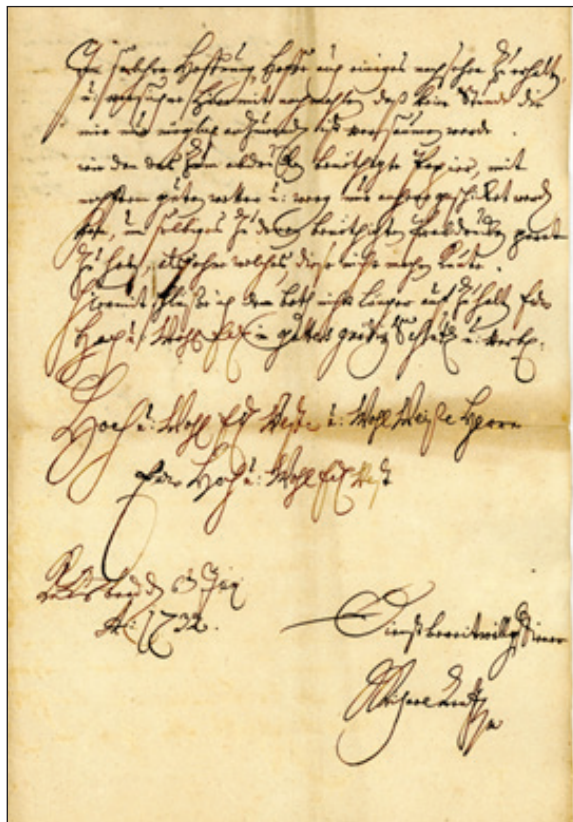


Figure 9: The end of Michael Rentz's letter from 13 June 1738, when he undertook to complete the copper engraving of the Polička obelisk<sup>125</sup>

As has been stated, both fountains are also decorated with statues of saints. Motifs from classical mythology that are used on fountains in some other towns cannot be seen here. In fact, it is Saint George and Archangel Michael that are represented on the fountains in Polička. Both of them are perceived in the Christian tradition as fighters against evil and its initiator – the devil. Both statues express the same wish – the victory over the evil in its broadest sense. Saint George is killing a dragon; he is kneeling on its body and stabbing a golden lance into its throat. Archangel Michael, the leader or prince of the heavenly army will be the main agent of the final victory over Satan according to the Revelation of Saint John or the Apocalypse. In the period in question, Archangel Michael also had a different function – he became the symbol of the anti-reformation fight.<sup>126</sup> He is depicted on the Polička fountain, pressing the devil's head

<sup>125</sup> SOA Zámorsk, SOKA Svitavy, Archiv města Polička II, box. 254, inv. no. 609.

<sup>126</sup> ROYT, *Slovník biblické ikonografie*, 23. NEJEDLÝ – GLÁSER, *Mariánský sloup v Poličce*, 51.

with his left foot and holding a gilded fiery sword in his right hand raised above. In his left hand, he is clutching an oval shield with the monogram of Jesus Christ – IHS (Iesus Hominum Salvator). Accompanying the letters that have often been used as a symbol of the Jesuit order in the modern era, there are also three nails from Jesus's cross. As has been claimed, the cult of Archangel Michael had been present in the town's background earlier – there is St Michael's Church with a cemetery. This consecration took another function of Saint Michael into consideration – that of the person who weighs souls on Doomsday;<sup>127</sup> nevertheless, the newly built church altar depicted the fall of proud angels.<sup>128</sup> After the statue of Archangel Michael was transported to the area of the cemetery, this last function prevailed.



Figure 10: The statue of Saint Michael Archangel on the Polička fountain (photo by Miroslav Beneš)

The above-mentioned Jesuits were not established in this royal dowry town; but the town representation tended to incline to this influential order, as testified by other artefacts. In particular, the town hall chapel, consecrated in 1751, is dedicated

<sup>127</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>128</sup> JUNEK – KONEČNÝ, *Dějiny města Poličky*, 181.

to the prominent Jesuit saint – Saint Francis Xavier. The altar painting represents this Jesuit missionary baptizing pagans. Alongside the altar painting there are statues of other significant Jesuits – the order’s founder Saint Ignatius, and Francis Borgia. All the statues were created by Řehoř Thény, who is commemorated in connection to Jaroměř, or Pacák’s stonemason’s workshop. The apotheosis of the best-known Jesuit missionary, Saint Francis Xavier, spreading Christianity to four continents, is depicted on the ceiling fresco. It was painted by Ondřej Andršt who settled in the culturally stimulating town of Polička in 1743.<sup>129</sup> It may also have been by means of the chapel’s composition that the town representatives expressed their determination to support Jesuit missions in their manor, which was inhabited by non-Catholic inhabitants as well.

### Conclusion

The towns of Jaroměř and Polička were among the smallest and least significant royal dowry towns of the Bohemian Kingdom in the Middle Ages and the early modern era. Whereas in the case of Jaroměř, situated on a trade route and neighbouring the confluence of two rivers, the cause of its long-term inferiority was its location on a relatively small rocky promontory, providing the burghers with just enough space for a square of the street type, Polička was founded in an area of adverse natural conditions, which is supported by the absence of agricultural settlement in the pre-urban era. These unfavourable factors were reflected in the economic situation of the town as well as at its cultural and demographical levels. The impacts of the Thirty Years’ War were disastrous; the war intensified the crisis in both the towns, and it was especially Polička as a depopulated town that is reported to have resembled a rubbish heap.

Nevertheless, the post-war development was entirely different. On the one hand, Jaroměř could not significantly utilize its manor, comprised of just a minor number of subjects and three villages liable to the tax called “šos”. On the other hand, Polička involved all its serfs and inhabitants of the villages in statute labour duties, and, thanks to its manor farm, managed to pay off all debts by the end of the seventeenth century. The burghers endowed with a brewing right found themselves economically stronger and the town municipality became affluent at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Whereas the Jaroměř municipal representatives had lost a significant number of liege villages after the confiscation of 1547 as they were situated in areas convenient for agriculture, surrounded by large aristocratic manors, the citizens of Polička made use of the fact that no noble entrepreneurs in the sixteenth century had been interested in the villages belonging to the town, which was an advantage obvious from a distance of one century. The perseverance of the first post-war generations directed the town to its “golden era”, as the first three quarters of the eighteenth century were called by the Polička historian Antonín Hájek (1791–1863).

An accompanying feature of the historical processes described above was the spreading of Baroque architecture and art in the context of both towns in question. The present contribution has focused on the decoration of the public space with Marian plague columns and the functions of these in the first half of the eighteenth century. Besides the protection and help epitomized by the Virgin Mary, saints associated with her, anti-plague patron saints accompanied by Saint Florian, Jesuit saints, and the very popular Saint John of Nepomuk, these compositions played also other roles within the towns’ society: they offered an opportunity for self-representation of the

129 JUNEK, *Polička. Mariánský obelisk*, 31. JUNEK, *Polička. Barokní a gotická radnice*, 28.

town and the town representatives. They indicated the wealth of the town and its inhabitants, namely burghers with the brewing right, and they also provided means of separating the town milieu from its surroundings and its own past. It was especially through the example of the Polička Baroque composition that the communicative functions could be understood. These functions were ascribed to Baroque artworks in the spirit of the mentality of the time, too: to differentiate the so far insignificant Polička from other Bohemian royal towns, and to emphasize the difference between the town representatives and their subjects, and between the Catholics and secret non-Catholics.

Whereas the town of Jaroměř afforded the sumptuous pillar originating in 1723–1727 thanks to the marriage of one of the main artists, Matyáš Bernard Braun, to a daughter of a prominent burgher of Jaroměř, the citizens of Polička paid the same amount of money for their obelisk, made by the Litomyšl workshop of Jiří František Pacák, as they spent on the radical reconstruction of the town hall. What considerable “conspicuous consumption” at the time of decline of most of the royal towns of the Bohemian Kingdom! As an epilogue, let us add that a few years later the Polička urban society started to go through a serious inner crisis, reflected in the growing number of alcoholics and poor education of the younger generation. The superior offices had to look into numerous offences. After his visitation of the town, Emperor Joseph II even declared that he had not seen such misbehaved children anywhere in Bohemia.<sup>130</sup> The prosperity turned into decline and corruption for the Polička inhabitants. Since the last quarter of the eighteenth century a slow decline can be seen, when the town gradually became relatively insignificant again.<sup>131</sup> It became a town which makes us amazed by the impressive artworks decorating the town’s public space: the square, which proves, through its size, the town’s inferior position in the Middle Ages, was decorated with a unique Baroque composition of sculptures and a two-storey town hall of a palace type, which has rightly enjoyed the status of a national cultural monument since 2008. Polička presents a rare example of a royal town that managed to overcome the disadvantages of its natural conditions in the pre-industrial era and to become substantially affluent. The inhabitants of Jaroměř have never had such potential, and due to the very limited space within the town walls and the small manor, could not have had either. Yet Jaroměř also features Baroque artworks by means of which the municipal representation or individual people communicated with their vicinity and differentiated themselves from it.

#### Abbreviations

LCI – Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie

SOA – State Regional Archives

SOKA – State District Archives

130 ŠIMŮNEK, *Historický atlas měst České republiky*, sv. 30, 19.

131 JUNEK – KONEČNÝ, *Dějiny města Poličky*, 213 and following.



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