

Enrichment to Public Presentation of Religious Identity of (Czech) Utraquist Towns

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In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Utraquism had been the most popular religion in Bohemia until it was harshly suppressed by Catholics after the Battle on the White Mountain in 1620 that again installed the Habsburg rule in Bohemia. After that date, all monuments commemorating Reformation were almost completely destroyed, shading material memories of the Utraquist past into forgetfulness. Only a few public monuments escaped the censor's eyes; they were rare and at first sight did not diverge substantially from the Catholic doctrine. The majority of public monuments got lost through hostility of Catholic officials following the edict of 1624 by regent Charles of Liechtenstein forbidding any images or inscriptions, which did not comply with Catholic orthodoxy. On the example of one Utraquist town, I would like to show how Utraquism – in its core a religious attitude – became a key issue in construction of public identity and representation of Bohemian towns.

Linked mainly to the town culture of the 15th and 16th centuries, lay civil structures brought new forms of social prestige building and religious representation; since the second half of the fifteenth century, Bohemian towns proudly and openly show their attachment to Utraquism and the Bohemian king. They attempt to show their religious background and social-political position through their public monuments as well.

An interesting source on the history and culture of the town of Hradec Králové is 1780 edition by Carl J. von Bienenberg *Geschichte der Stadt Koeniggratz*. There we find,

beyond interesting extracts from older sources, also descriptions of older monuments, which were preserved still in Bienenbergs time. In 1460 Bienenberg mentions an interesting ancient monument in Hradec – a sandstone fountain with figural and heraldic decoration. He wrote that it had been built on the main square under the Burgrave of the Hradec county Nicolas Berka of Dubá and Lipá to honour the Bohemian king George of Poděbrady and his successor Wladislaus of Jagiello. From Bienenberg's description I try to read the meaning of the monument's iconography and coded message it sends out to the public, both the town citizens and its visitors.

Inventive and complicated decoration of the fountain clearly suggests that the town used public space to promote its two core identities, the confessional identity of its Utraquist citizens and the identity of royal town close to the royal family and the highest officials of the kingdom administration. The impuls to such a heraldic and iconography programme was undoubtedly given by the town council of Hradec that used intertwined confessional and political identity for building its own representation. In the paper, I will present various council's achievements of public representation through monuments that created a complex set of public iconography, now lost, communicating the status of the town to the outside world.

Hradec is not the only town, where fragments of similar public town decoration were preserved. A few fragments and sources suggest that similar forms of town representation as the Utraquist community – this time with stressing the Hussite tradition – were used in Tábor in the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries and in Prague. Hradec, however, is an interesting example of fragmentarily preserved complex iconography programme that stresses the town's Utraquist community faithful to the king

and to the Bohemian kingdom. With a considerable probability, three out of four Utraquist monuments can be linked to the town council and its effort to represent the town in public eyes. Next to the buildings of churches, public monuments and public space of Bohemian towns appear as suitable environment to express the community's religious identity through artworks, and architecture. Their installation was supervised by the town officials and they corresponded with strategic and political topography of the town.