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**Marian Columns in Central Europe as Media of Post-Tridentine
Policy of Recatholisation**

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Marian Columns in Central Europe are an expression of the Marian cult as well as testimonials to Marian devotion in times of the Counter-Reformation. They were erected as memorials and monuments of the Catholic Reform as well as an artistic expression of a transregional public piety in the public sphere especially within the Kingdom of Bavaria and the Habsburg Empire. The article summarises this type of Christian monument and its political iconography in 17th and 18th century.

Keywords: Bavaria, Silesia, Bohemia, Counter Reformation, Maria Immaculata, Madonna with the Crescent, patron saints, pietas Mariana, plague column, Demonstratio Catholica

Central European Marian columns are testimonials to Marian devotion that were presented as memorials and monuments of the Catholic Reform as well as an artistic expression of a transregional public piety (“Staatsfrömmigkeit”¹) in the 17th and 18th centuries in the public sphere, especially within the Kingdom of Bavaria and the Habsburg Empire. The tradition of this type of monument or memorial goes back to the late 15th-century Italy. In Udine Mary with the child on top of a marble column originated from 1487.² Further analyses of this topic are a research *desideratum*. Marian columns are based on the Mother of God’s interpretation basically as the Queen of Heaven (*Regina Caeli*) and Saint Mary of Victory (*Sancta Maria de Victoria*) – interpretations that were given a special significance by the Council of Trent (1545-1563) for the Catholic Church being related to the Catholic doctrine of faith of the Immaculate Conception (*immaculata conceptio*)³. As stated by K. Ruth: “Especially the tabernacle on the high altar as a place where God is present among men, the presentation of the Holy Trinity above, often combined with an image of the Coronation or the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, elucidate post-Tridentine emphases of faith within high Baroque churches. In 18th century ecclesiastical art they had their congenial appearance.”⁴

Rome

The Marian column in Rome is to be interpreted as a mere sacral monument of peace being erected in 1614 on the Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, in front of the eponymous church. The inscription on the pedestal speaks of the patron and the reason for the donation: *PAVLUS V PONT[IFEX] MAX[IMUS] COLVMNAM...PACI DICAVERAT...BEATISSIMAE VIRGINI EX CVIVS VISCERIBVS PRINCEPS VERAE PACIS GENITVS EST DONVM DEDIT*⁵ (Pope Paul V Borghese dedicated the column to peace and gave it as a gift to the Blessed Virgin Mary out of whom the principles of true peace is born).

The iconological and iconographical tradition of post-Tridentine Marian columns is apparent here. The bronze statue of Mary with her child standing on a crescent and being crowned by a twelve-star-nimbus is situated on a cylindrical base on top of a Corinthian capital. The marble column itself is based on a high pedestal where two bronze dragons and two eagles are fixed at the corners.

The biblical narration of the Woman of the Apocalypse within the 12th chapter of the Revelation of John primarily provides the iconography of Madonna with the Crescent (*Mondsichelmadonna*) or rather Maria Immaculata, who is attributed by the crescent, the twelve-star-nimbus, the dragon and not least the child as the main attributes particularly in 17th century.⁶

The marble column itself is a *spolia* from the Basilica of Maxentius on Forum Romanum in Rome dating from 303-313. Interpreting the monument as an expression of "triumph of the true faith over paganism"⁷ as Damien Tri-coire points out, by composing the Maria Immaculata on the top of an antique column, is too simple. Furthermore it is rather a memorial of peace with roots in ancient times by emphasizing the fact that the *spolia* originates from a secular temple of peace (...*COLVMNA...QVAE STETIT DIV PACIS PROFANA IN AEDE...*). And quite similar to the phenomenon of typology in Christian theology the PAX VERA originating in the Virgin Mary is the "antitype" in this case.

Munich

A political dimension was added to the Marian column in Munich which was consecrated in 1638. "Inspired by the Roman columns,"⁸ as Walter F. Kalina writes, Elector (*Kurfürst*) Maximilian I of Bavaria had a monument of "Patrona Bavariae" constructed in Munich's market place, today's Marienplatz. According to Michael Schattenhofer, the donation is to be understood not as a monument of triumph or victory,⁹ but as a memorial *ex voto*, as a votive deposit for the Elector's vow during the Swedish occupation of Bavaria in the Thirty Year's War *to do a God-pleasing deed in case the local capital Munich and also the city of Landshut were preserved from the enemy's ruin and destruction* ("...ein gottgefälliges Werk anzustellen, wenn die hiesige Hauptstadt München und auch die Stadt Landshut vor des Feinds endlichem Ruin und Zerstörung erhalten würden").¹⁰ "The manner of fulfilling the vow was at that time a unique (...) manifestation of the broad post-Tridentine Marian movement in the course of the profound Catholic Renewal as well as the ardent veneration of the Virgin Mary by Maximilian."¹¹ The Electoral Court was instructed to fulfil the vow, above all the Jesuit advisory group around Maximilian I. Among them were Dean Jakob Golla and the electoral confessor Adam Contzen.¹² The first result of the counselling committee was to donate altars which "remained conventional"¹³ however, according to Michael Schattenhofer. The decisive impetus for erecting a *monumentum publicum*, a public monument, in the form of a Marian column *in loco conspicuo*, on a widely visible site, probably came from the Elector itself in the same year (fig 1).

The Madonna on top of a roofed capital is made of gilt bronze representing the (baroque) type of Maria Immaculata. She stands on the crescent with one foot and holds Jesus (with a globe) in her left hand, the sceptre in her raised right hand. On her head she wears a massive golden crown (fig. 2).

The base of the Munich Column stands on a pedestal on a square floor plan. On top of the pedestal one can find bronze angels' heads at the four corners and fruit garlands in between; on the southern and northern side the bronze coats of arms of the donor Maximilian and his wife Anna of Austria are fixed. According to the consecration inscription in Latin on the Western and Eastern sides "Maximilian had this memorial erected in honour of our most gracious God, our virgin Mother of God, the gracious mistress and mighty protectress of Bavaria due to the preservation of the country, the cities, himself and his dynasty" (*DEO OPTIMO MAXIMO / VIRGINI DEIPARAE / BOICAE DOMINAE / BENIGNISSIMAE / PROTECTRICI / POTENTISSIMAE / OB PATRIAM / URBES EXERCITUS / SEIPSUM DOMUM / ...MONUMENTUM / MAXIMILIANUS...POSUIT...*). The primary vow referring to the rescue of the cities of Munich and Landshut was extended to the whole country of Bavaria and the Elector itself.

The pedestal stands on a broad base on a square floor plan with four bronze putti on top of the four corners. Equipped with armour, sword, lance or dagger they fight against the monsters below. The inscriptions on the shields of the putti refer to the corresponding passage from the Old Testament. Psalm 90 (91):13 says: *Super aspidem et basilicum ambulabis leonem et draconem conculcabis* (Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet; fig. 3).¹⁴

Vienna and Prague

The Habsburg columns in Vienna and Prague are compositionally, iconographically and iconologically quite similar to the Munich monument but not identical. Jesus as a child appears in Munich only; the massive golden crown of Mary is replaced by a crown with twelve stars on the top, the moon is substituted with a snake or rather a dragon.

At the end of Thirty Year's War Swedish and French troops destroyed larger parts of Central Europe after the defeat of the Imperial Habsburg army at the Battle of Jankau/Jankov in 1645. The Vienna column is the result of Emperor Ferdinand III's vow "that in the future he will celebrate annually the Immaculate Conception in the whole country including religious festivities and fasting the previous evening in case the peril will pass luckily. Furthermore he will erect a statue in honour to the mighty Virgin Mary on a public place within the city (...)." ¹⁵ The records of the Viennese Prince-Bishop Philipp Friedrich von Breuner who finally consecrated the Vienna column in 1647 report that the Emperor intended to put the country under the protection and *patrocinium* of the glorious Virgin Mary and to build a column or statue including an effigy of Our Lady in a public place like in Munich. ¹⁶ The star-crowned Mother of God is standing on top of a composite capital crushing the dragon under her feet. On the top side of the base zone are – comparable to Munich – four putti fighting against monsters.

In 1648 the Swedish army was able to capture Prague *Malá Strana*, but not the Old Town on the opposite side of the river Vltava. Therefore Emperor Ferdinand III enacted to erect a Marian column in honour of The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary (*VIRGINI GENITRICI SINE ORIGINIS LABE CONCEPTAE*) in memory of the successful defence of the city (*PROPUGNATAE AC LIBERTATAE URBIS*). An Imperial vow was not handed-down as in Vienna; although the Emperor himself intended the column to be modelled after the Viennese column and to be erected on Prague's Old Town Square. ¹⁷ The consecration took place in 1652, on the emperor's birthday in July. And similar to Munich and Vienna he implemented regular religious services and ceremonial processions. Interestingly the balustrade around the monument's base is a direct copy of the Munich memorial except for the fact that the the lanterns are missing (fig. 4).

It is important to stress the fact that the "politicization" of the monument is much less evident in Prague in comparison to Munich or Vienna: an "official" dedication of the country to the Virgin Mary cannot be found. Yet a copy of the most important Bohemian icon, the so-called Palladium of Stará Boleslav (Altbunzlau), was fixed at the pedestal of the column. The Palladium, a metal relief with an effigy of the Virgin Mary and her child, dates back to around the year 1400. According to Damien Tricoire it was said to protect the whole country. ¹⁸ The Marian column in Prague not only stands for the intactness of the city of Prague in times of war but also "the revitalisation of an older, pre-Hussite and pre-Reformation cult tradition (...) and the targeted promotion of the venerable Pilgrimage being nearly a day's journey away from Prague" ¹⁹ (fig. 5).

Wernstein, Klausenburg/Cluj-Napoca, Ratibor/Racibórz

Marian columns soon received recognition and were taken up by non-courtly circles and by the aristocracy within the Habsburg Empire: ²⁰ Emperor Leopold I, the son of Ferdinand III, donated the initial Vienna column to Count Georg Ludwig von Sinzendorf who had it set up in Wernstein am Inn in 1667 where it is located today (fig. 6). The emperor also had a bronze copy (or rather a look-a-like copy) of the column erected in Vienna at the original place *Am Hof* in 1667 too. The statue of St Mary – probably originally gilded –, the putti fighting against monsters, the column itself and the commemoration plaque are made of bronze; the foundation is made of stone. The stone lanterns that are bricked up today originally contained small glass windows. The whole ensemble is surrounded by a balustrade that may have also existed to the previous monument.

In view of the façade composition of the 17th-century Jesuit church opposite the column, the arrangement of the terraced vestibule in particular, an association with the *theatrum sacrum* is suggested according to Walter



1 Marian Column in Munich, 1638 (photo: M. Bogade)

2 Marian Column in Munich, detail



3 Marian Column in Munich, detail



4 Marian Column in Prague (photo: J. Eckert, 1900, Wikimedia Commons)

5 Prague, Old Town Square, etching from 1841 (from: K. Herlossohn, *Wanderungen durch das Riesengebirge und die Grafschaft Glatz*, Leipzig, Wigand, c. 1839)





6 Marian Column in Wernstein am Inn, postcard, 1938 (photo: M. Bogade)



7 Marian column in front of the Jesuit church in Klausenburg/Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár, historical view from the middle of 19th c. (Wikimedia Commons)



8 Marian Column in Klausenburg/Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár from 1744 (photo: M. Bogade)



9 Detail of fig. 8



10 Marian Column in Ratibor/Racibórz, 1725-1727 (Wikimedia Commons, Przykuta)

Kalina.²¹ The written sources are not clear in this case. Anyhow Leopold I, so to speak, inherited the *pietas Mariana* from the cradle that was already largely propagated by his father. His birth was considered to be an answer to prayer, and he was regarded as a fiancé of St Mary. After his coronation in 1658 he received his empire or emperorship from Mary as a fief – as described in a report from that time.²²

Donating these types of monuments was an occasion to uphold ones vows to the Virgin Mary and to exhibit ones piety as well as to promote re-Catholisation in the region. These monuments were a clear expression of *Pietas austriaca* having been erected numerously within the empire especially during the 18th century and demonstrated the affiliation of a city or region to the Catholic monarchy.²³

At the end of the 17th century, Transylvania became a province of the Habsburg Empire (*Diploma Leopoldina* dating from 1691). To quote Harald Roth “the Catholic Church had been supported as the sovereign’s confession and was also an essential pillar of the dynasty not only in this region”.²⁴ The Marian column in Klausenburg/Cluj-Napoca for instance is one of these monuments illustrating Habsburg “public piety” that appeared as a medium of post-Tridentine policy of re-Catholisation as well – it is just recalled that the Reformation in Transylvania was pretty much successful since the 1540’s. The monument was erected in 1744 in front of the Jesuit Church that was part of the Jesuit College in Klausenburg (fig. 7). Governor Anton Kornis donated the monument of gratitude for the end of the great plague 1738-1742; the Marian Column therefore appears as a so-called *Pestsäule* (plague column), a type of memorial that was popular in the south of Germany, in Austria, in Silesia, Bohemia, Hungary, Croatia etc.²⁵ St Mary appears as an *Immaculata* on top of a triangular column standing on a globe. A crescent is under her left foot, a snake under her right one. Only fragments are preserved from the twelve-star-nimbus on her head. The head of the putto in her left hand is surely a later composition. A crucifix may have originally been present, as is seen in a picture dating from 1859 (figs. 8, 9).

In the 16th century Silesia became part of the Habsburg Empire. According to Jerzy Gorzelik the Silesian nobility (*szlachta*) needed to prove its loyalty towards Rome or rather Vienna with frequent artistic donations.²⁶ This special practice of piety promoted by the ruling dynasty was intensively adopted by those who saw themselves as imperial subjects. Besides the nobility this included religious communities and their abbots, priests as well as civil servants or craftsmen.²⁷ Aurelia Zduńczyk noticed that over the whole of Central Europe Marian columns were quite similar not only by reference to their composition but also regarding their function. The memorials in Munich, Vienna and Prague bear a clear votive character and so do, for instance, the Marian columns in Münsterberg/Ziębice, Liebenthal/Lubomierz or Ratibor/Racibórz in Silesia.

The monument in Ratibor for example was donated by Countess Maria Elisabeth von Gaschin, daughter of Chancellor Franz Wilhelm Popel von Lobkovitz of Bohemia, and erected 1725-1727 (fig. 10). According to Aurelia Zduńczyk the monument quotes not only the type of Marian columns within the Habsburg Empire that are characterised by whirling clouds on the shaft but also the column that was erected in Vienna by Leopold I in 1679.²⁸ The close relationship to the imperial dynasty was also demonstrated by adding the figures of three saints on top of the pedestal: St Sebastian, St Marcellus and St Florian. The religious cult and the veneration of Florian were especially promoted by the House of Habsburg in times of the Counter-Reformation in order to create a kind of “imperial patron saint” (*Landespatron*) besides for instance St Leopold,²⁹ St Josef,³⁰ and Mary of course.

In this very much pointed contribution I tried to give an overview of an artistic phenomenon in Central Europe that ranges between the poles of private and public piety originating from an ecclesiastical sphere, being adopted by monarchs and handed down to the nobility and the bourgeoisie. In many cases these memorials were votive deposits that served as the media of recatholisation or rather *demonstratio catholica* in the regions looking at the specific iconography and iconology.

It is somehow exciting to see that Marian columns carry an effect even in 20th century. As a symbol of foreign rule and Habsburg domination the column in Prague was demolished in 1918 by the Czech anarchist Franta Sauer a few days after the Republic of Czechoslovakia was proclaimed (fig. 11). What are left are some fragments in the National Museum in Prague and a barely readable commemorative plaque on the Old Town Square. For



11 Fallen Marian Column in Prague, photo from 1918 (Wikimedia Commons, J. Kameníček)

the same reason perhaps the column in Klausenburg was translocated in 1959 and re-erected in 1961 behind the Church of St Peter outside the city centre on a place difficult to access and barely visible. Many columns in Silesia have been neglected and forgotten. A natural and very human process?

- 1 For this specific term see: F. MACHILEK, "Privatfrömmigkeit und Staatsfrömmigkeit", in: *Kaiser Karl IV. Staatsmann und Mäzen*, F. SEIBT (ed.), München, Prestel, 1978, pp. 87-101, passim.
- 2 M. LECHNER, in: *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonografie*, vol. 3, Rom et al., Herder, 1994, column 204. The monument probably presents Virgin Mary as patron saint of Udine according to the model of the city in her hand. Cf. E. HEGG et al., *Oberitalien Ost*, Stuttgart, Reclam, 1965, p. 573.
- 3 See K. GUTH, "Geschichtlicher Abriß der marianischen Wallfahrtsbewegungen im deutschsprachigen Raum", in: *Handbuch der Marienkunde*, W. BEINERT-H. PETRI (eds.), Regensburg, Pustet, 1984, pp. 722-848, here pp. 779-785; F. ZOEPFL, "Barock", in: *Lexikon der Marienkunde*, K. ALGERMISSEN-L. BÖER-C. FECKES-J. TYCIAK (eds.), Pustet, Regensburg, 1957, columns 566-567, here 566.
- 4 K. GUTH, *op. cit.*, 1984, p. 783 (translation from German by the author).
- 5 W. POCINO, "La colonna di S. Maria Maggiore", in: *Lazio ieri a oggi*, 2013, pp. 278-279.
- 6 Cf. J. FONROBERT, "Apokalyptisches Weib", in: *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, vol. 1, Rom et al., Herder, 1994, columns 145-150; J. FOURNÉE, "Immaculata Conceptio", in: *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, vol. 2, Rom et al., Herder, 1994, columns 338-344, here 343; M. WOELK, "Apokalypse (motive)", in: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 1, Freiburg et al., Herder, 2009, columns 805-807.
- 7 D. TRICOIRE, "'Sklave sein heißt herrschen': Die Münchner und Prager Mariensäulen in ihrem religiösen und politischen Kontext", in: *Transregionalität in Kult und Kultur. Bayern, Böhmen und Schlesien zur Zeit der Gegenreformation*, M. BOGADE (ed.), Köln et al., Böhlau, 2016, pp. 59-70, here p. 62.
- 8 W. KALINA, "Die Mariensäulen in Wernstein am Inn (1645/47), Wien (1664/66), München (1637/38) und Prag (1650)", in: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, vol. LVIII, 2004, pp. 43-61, here p. 46.
- 9 M. SCHATTENHOFER, *Die Mariensäule in München*, München et al., Schnell & Steiner, 1971, p. 6.
- 10 Quoted from M. SCHATTENHOFER, *op. cit.*, 1971, p. 6.
- 11 M. SCHATTENHOFER, *op. cit.*, 1971, p. 16 (translation from German by the author).
- 12 Cf. A. ZDUŃCZYK, "Schlesische Mariensäulen als Zeugnisse der transregionalen Verbreitung eines Typis sakraler Freilichtdenkmäler zur Zeit der Gegenreformation", in: *Transregionalität in Kult und Kultur. Bayern, Böhmen und Schlesien zur Zeit der Gegenreformation*, M. BOGADE (ed.), Köln et al., Böhlau, 2016, pp. 145-160, here n. 4.
- 13 M. SCHATTENHOFER, *op. cit.*, 1971, p. 8 (translation from German by the author).

- 14 www.bibelserver.com (accessed 1 July 2016).
- 15 Quoted from W. KALINA, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 45 (translation from German by the author).
- 16 W. KALINA, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 45.
- 17 Cf. W. KALINA, *op. cit.*, 2004, pp. 58-59.
- 18 D. TRICOIRE, *Mit Gott rechnen. Katholische Reform und politisches Kalkül in Frankreich, Bayern und Polen-Litauen*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013, p. 188 with reference to J. MIKULEC, *Pobělohorská rekatolizace v českých zemích*, Praha, Státní Pedagogické Nakl., 1992, pp. 30-40. On the Palladium of Stará Boleslav see recently J. ROYT, "Palladium und Lerche", in: *Transregionalität in Kult und Kultur. Bayern, Böhmen und Schlesien zur Zeit der Gegenreformation*, M. BOGADE (ed.), Köln et al., Böhlau, 2016, pp. 163-175.
- 19 W. KALINA, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 59
- 20 Cf. A. ZDUŇCZYK, *op. cit.*, 2016, p. 148.
- 21 W. KALINA, *op. cit.*, 2004, p. 53
- 22 A. CORETH, *Pietas Austriaca. Österreichische Frömmigkeit im Barock*, München, Oldenbourg, 1982, p. 57.
- 23 Cf. A. ZDUŇCZYK, *op. cit.*, 2016, p. 148
- 24 Cf. H. ROTH, *Kleine Geschichte Siebenbürgens*, Wien et al., Böhlau, 2012, p. 79.
- 25 Cf. O. HOLL et al., "Pest, Pestbilder", in: *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonografie*, vol. 3, Rom et al., Herder, 1994, columns 407-409, here 408-409.
- 26 J. GORZELIK, "Zwischen *demonstratio catholica* und Selbstdarstellung. Künstlerische Stiftungen des katholischen Adels in Oberschlesien im Zeitalter der Konfessionalisierung", in: *Adel in Schlesien 1. Herrschaft - Kultur - Selbstdarstellung*, J. HARASIMOWICZ-M. WEBER (eds.), München, Oldenbourg, 2010, pp. 101-114, here p. 103.
- 27 Cf. A. ZDUŇCZYK, *op. cit.*, 2016, p. 149.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 150.
- 29 Cf. K. HOLUBAR, "Der heilige Leopold im Kontext der europäischen Nationalpatrone", in: *Heiliger Leopold. Mensch, Politiker, Landespatron*, C. AIGNER-K. HOLUBAR-W. C. HUBER (eds.), St. Pölten, Landesmuseum Niederösterreich, 2013, pp. 71-80.
- 30 Cf. S. SAMERSKI, "Joseph", in: *Die Landespatrone der böhmischen Länder. Geschichte - Verehrung - Gegenwart*, S. SAMERSKI (ed.), Paderborn et al., Ferdinand Schöningh, 2009, pp. 141-149.

Marco Bogade

Marijanski stupovi u središnjoj Europi kao medij post-Tridentske rekatolizacijske politike

Marijanski stupovi u središnjoj Europi jesu primjeri marijanskog kulta te potvrde o marijanskoj pobožnosti u vrijeme protureformacije. Podignuti su kao spomenici katoličke reforme te kao oblik umjetničkog izričaja transregionalne javne pobožnosti u javnom prostoru, osobito u Kraljevini Bavarskoj i Habsburškom carstvu. U članku se analizira ova vrsta spomenika, njihova ikonografija i politička poruka u 17. i 18. stoljeću.

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