



## MUNICIPAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE BOHEMIAN KING PŘEMYSL OTAKAR II.

### The origins of the town of Polička and its geographical and urban importance in the context of the medieval urban network

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#### **ABSTRACT**

Medieval towns played a significant role in the political and administrative development of the Kingdom of Bohemia. Although their emergence on our territory was considerably delayed compared to other European states, in which their continuity can often be traced back to ancient times, their importance is not diminished in any way. The aim of this study is to present the reasons for the creation of the medieval urban network of the Bohemian Kingdom, especially during the time of the king of Bohemia Přemysl Otakar II, whose person is strongly associated with the initiation of the foundation of towns and their development. As an example, attention will be focused on the East Bohemian town of Polička, which, with its location and internal layout, vividly demonstrates the motives that led Přemysl Otakar II to such an extensive foundational work.

**Keywords:** municipal foundations, historical urbanism, Polička, Czech Republic

**Thematic block:** Theory and history of the town

## Introduction

The 13th century was an epoch of dynamic development in Czech history. Its beginning already promised significant changes in the field of domestic and foreign politics after the Bohemian king Přemysl Otakar I obtained the hereditary royal title in 1212. The entire 13th century was therefore in a spirit of change, not only in the political context, but also in the administrative, economic, social, and cultural contexts. A fundamental part of these changes was the development of the medieval urban network, which became not only a kind of political control body of the rebellious Bohemian nobility, but also an important administrative and economic network, necessary for the further development of the land (Žemlička, J., 1986; Fiala, Z., 1965). The history of Bohemian and Moravian towns has not been neglected in the Czech milieu and the collected information provides a more than sufficient basis for further research development – even though the period of the 13th century is characterized by certain gaps in the historical source materials. Therefore, most studies only deal with a later period, in which more varied historical sources can be used, especially town books, thanks to which a more spontaneous and realistic image of the town can be created. For the long 13th century, only charters and extant diplomatics material can be used, which were processed in the edition series *Codex diplomaticus et epistolatis regni Bohemiae*. This Bohemian diplomatics covers all extant material up to 1310 (Friedrich, D. et al. 1904–2013). The most important traditional Czech researchers of medieval towns undoubtedly include, for example, Václav Vojtíšek (e.g., Vojtíšek, V., 1930, 1940), František Hoffmann (e.g., Hoffmann, F., 1990, 1992, 2009), Jaroslav Mezník (e.g., Mezník, J., 19971, 1990) and Josef Žemlička (e.g., Žemlička, J., 1978, 1998, 2003). We also encounter several local and regional researchers whose work complements the facts known so far. Thanks to their works, the fact is constantly confirmed that despite very similar development tendencies in the territory of the former Bohemian Kingdom, each town was (and is) unique.

Most of the Bohemian monarchs were well aware of the importance of the existence and growth of towns, which became their close allies, but at the same time could also be their strong adversaries. The ruler most closely associated with the growth of the Bohemian and Moravian urban network is Přemysl Otakar II, nicknamed the “Iron and Golden” King. The purposeful and ambitious sovereign became famous not only for his abilities as a conqueror (thanks to his victory in the Battle of Kressenbrunn in 1260, the annexation of the Central Alpine lands, i.e., Styria, Carniola, and Carinthia, to the Bohemian Kingdom, bringing his rule almost to the Adriatic Sea), but also prudent domestic policy and openness to administrative innovations (Kuthan, J., 1993). Although Přemysl himself fell in 1278 in the Battle of Marchfeld, the urban network that was created during his reign lasted for centuries and provided a solid foundation for future development.

Among the medieval towns founded at the initiative of Přemysl Otakar II, we can also name Polička in East Bohemia. It became an important point on the land border of Bohemia and Moravia, as well as on the path of the Trstenice trade route, connecting not only these two historical territories of the Bohemian Kingdom, but also the foreign region of Hungary (Konečný, K., and Růžička, J., 2010). The tendencies of Přemysl’s urban policy can be observed in its development, thanks to the importance of its unique geographical location. Today’s Polička is perhaps just a small town in the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands with approximately 9,000 inhabitants, but its beginnings were part of the truly magnificent urbanisation plan of King Přemysl Otakar II.

## 1. The beginnings of Czech medieval towns

Setting out the requirements for the classification as a town is a complicated task on which there will probably never be 100% agreement. Currently, the criteria for a town are defined by several factors. For example, the size of the population and population density, or the quality of urban amenities and sufficient conveniences in terms of services to citizens, a developed network of establishments, institutions and infrastructure exceeding the needs of the local population so that the town itself can become a catchment area for the surrounding area. However, a condition for the creation of a town (apart from its economic function), which is valid not only for the present, but also resonated in medieval times, is the fact that the town must be primarily an administrative centre. In the concept of medieval historiography, it is also crucial that it is a legal town, i.e., governed by the principles of town law (e.g., Kejř, J., 1998, Hoffmann, F., 1975 or Haas, A., 1952). The members of the Bohemian ruling family of the House of Přemyslid were already very well aware of these essential functions, during whose rule the primary administrative fortified settlements began to take shape on the territory of the Czech basin.

The basic building block of some future Bohemian towns were the Přemysl fortified settlements, which formed the so-called **castle system** from the beginning of the 11th century. Its purpose was the monarch's control over the territory of Bohemia and Moravia. When the castle system was created, a territorial district was created at the individual centres, headed by a castle administrator, subject to the person of the duke. There was also a concentration of population in the vicinity of the castle seat, which formed smaller agglomerations. Public administration, however, underwent fundamental changes during the 13th century, during which the previously **unified ducal, then royal, administration was broken up** by the division into separate churches, manorial lords and municipal administrations (Hledíková, Z., et al. 2006). This change was caused, among other things, by the fact that the monarch had very significant competition in the form of the nobility, who gradually acquired hereditary lands and offices and wanted to create their own institutions. The nobles' free holding of land resulted in a change in the balance of power with their own monarch. The growing islands of noble property (as well as the property of ecclesiastical institutions) began to disrupt the closed economy of the castle districts. In addition to the properties themselves, the nobility also acquired their subjects, through whom they profited from rents, and over whom they could exercise (at first only partially) justice and general supervision. Local feudal lords thus began to largely escape the effective supervision of the king. With the gradual advancement of the nobility, the integrity of the castle system rapidly began to disappear, and finally, in the middle of the 13th century, it reached its final demise (Žemlička, J., 1978).

However, a certain group of Přemyslid castles with surrounding agglomerations (situated primarily in agriculturally suitable and populated areas) retained their status even after that and gradually grew into real towns (for example, Čáslav, Litoměřice, Chrudim and Hradec Králové). The future medieval network of towns and townships was thus connected to the older settlement layers, and became a stable base of economic and cultural life (Hoffmann, F., 1990). However, this was not the only possibility for the creation of towns. A frequent phenomenon was also the establishment on a so-called green field site, i.e., in a place completely unrelated to a previous settlement, but in geographically advantageous places, on trade routes, in economically promising areas, near important royal castles or in localities with newly discovered deposits of mineral wealth. Another option was to transfer the already existing centre to a more convenient location. It was also possible to calculate with the colonisation of already existing settlements, which initially focused mainly on agriculture (Hledíková, Z., et al. 2006). In addition, the arrival of the German-speaking population greatly contributed to the overall internal colonisation. These settlers came to Bohemia and Moravia to participate in the founding of villages and the construction of the towns themselves. In addition, they brought knowledge of more advanced legal norms from their homelands, which they later domesticated on the territory of the Bohemian Kingdom. However, this colonisation was not a purely Czech phenomenon, but was part of the economic, social, and demographic processes of all of Europe (Žemlička, J., 1986).

We can therefore summarise that the creation of towns contributed to the disintegration of the castle system and at the same time the network of royal towns became the monarch's buttress. To a large extent, the royal towns ensured that the nobility did not completely escape from monarchical power, and thus became a key player during the 13th century, which was one of the most dynamic periods of Czech history (Rejnuš, M., 1958).

The basic features of the urban network were completed in the 1280s and lasted until the modern era (Hledíková, Z., et al, 2006).

## 2. The municipal foundations by Přemysl Otakar II

The rigorous growth of the towns of the Kingdom of Bohemia is associated with the person of the **Bohemian king Přemysl Otakar II**, who ruled in 1253–1278. Thanks to his initiative, the system of royal towns of the Bohemian Kingdom was created in an almost definitive form (the exception is, for example, the establishment of Nový Bydžov, Kutná Hora or the New Town of Prague). Přemysl's activity consisted mainly in the ability to use the developed elements of the previous urban and suburban development and an intensive effort to strengthen his political position against the ever-growing aristocracy. Přemysl's founding activity was truly extensive and diverse (in addition to towns, the king also built many castles, churches, and monasteries) and clearly refers to the increasing economic power of the state (Kuthan, J., 1993). The fundamental reasons for the Přemysl's foundations were threefold – the increase of royal incomes, the consolidation of the central government against the growing power of the nobility and the provision of a more perfect defence of the land against external enemies (Rejnuš, M., 1958).

The initial institution of a town, whether royal or fief, required the **sovereign's consent**. The foundation itself hid many advantages not only for the future burghers, but above all for the founder himself. A fee had to be paid for the granting of land for construction, and many incomes flowed from an already existing town to the manorial lords, for example, a regular annual interest, as well as from the hides assessed to the town, from taverns, shops of the spa and others. Many other fees flowed to the king from the rent of the reeve's office, court fines, and above all from the possibility of collecting so-called special levies, which could be issued at the discretion of the sovereign himself (Fiala, Z., 1965). This certainty of financial incomes was sufficient motivation for the king to agree to the establishment of towns and to initiate them himself. The Bohemian rulers were also very well aware of the fact that, under appropriate circumstances, towns could become a strong political and military buttress for their power, not only against enemies from abroad, but also against the domestic rebellious nobility.

The reign of Přemysl Otakar II was the peak period of building the basic urban network. New towns could actively benefit from the experience of older towns, and already existing towns developed and grew. Temporary dwellings became more permanent, wooden and in some cases even stone buildings, churches and monasteries were built, crafts and trade developed, just as revenues from newly opened silver mines grew. There was a **more regular topographical distribution of towns** that arose in central, southern, and eastern Bohemia, as well as in Moravia (Hoffmann, F., 2009). The towns founded in the period before Přemysl's rule and his founding initiatives were typical for their irregular distribution – whether they were towns in Bohemia or Moravia. Přemysl's activity changed this situation noticeably. The entire northwest of Bohemia and the area east of Prague, which once contained a wide gap stretching all the way to Hradec Králové, were now dotted with royal towns. Several new royal towns also appeared in the south of Bohemia. On the other hand, areas without a single royal town remained, for example, the North Bohemian area bounded by the Litoměřice–Mělník–Nymburk–Hradec Králové arc, as well as the large circuit on the Bohemian-Moravian border and also the area of Eastern Moravia. The explanation can be the fundamental inhospitable conditions of high elevation, poor road and route conditions, scarce population, and therefore not very favourable conditions for trade. The essence of the relatively regular distribution of Přemysl's towns lies in the limited internal market. If they existed in the immediate vicinity, they would have to compete with one other economically and would prevent each other from prosperity, which would also affect the amount of fees flowing into the royal coffers. In addition, each town also needed a sufficient agricultural hinterland to guarantee the sustenance of the urban population. On the other hand, a certain accumulation of towns could occur in places of particularly busy trade (for example, along trade routes), or in places where military defence interests were pursued (Rejnuš, M., 1957).

At the end of the reign of Přemysl Otakar II, the number of royal towns had reached around fifty. It is also necessary to mention his initiative beyond the borders of the Bohemian Kingdom and, for example, the founding of the town and castle in Královec (Königsberg, today Kaliningrad). The era of Přemysl Otakar II brought a **comprehensive concept of urban policy** to the Kingdom of Bohemia, the systematic use of the basic functions

of the town and the knowledge of a kind of “urban art”, which combined the knowledge of construction itself, the economy, the military and the practical planning and building of the urban complex, as well as the deepening of knowledge of town law, urban administration and municipal justice.

The internal colonisation activity of the 13th century also affected places that until then could be considered uninhabitable, for example the **deep border forests**, where no more populous settlements had existed before. There was settlement of otherwise climatically less hospitable areas, because at the end of the 13th century an exceptionally favourable warm and humid climate prevailed in Europe, and colonisation activity was therefore not only focused on the lowlands, but also penetrated into higher and more remote areas (Semotanová, E., Ježková, D. & Petráček, J., 1998). Put simply, previously economically unused land was being cultivated. The town of Polička is a prime example of such a foundation.

### 3. The town of Polička

#### 3.1. The land border and trade route

During the 1260s, the **magnificent urbanization plan** of Přemysl Otakar II was carried out, which had the task of completing the system of towns in the Czech east along the trade route, today called Trstenice. Several other towns were created during this plan, for example Kouřim, Kolín, Čáslav, Chrudim and Vysoké Mýto. One of the reasons for their establishment was also the drastic strengthening of royal power in the east of Bohemia (Konečný, K., and Růžička, J., 2010). The **town of Polička**, located in eastern Bohemia near the border with Moravia, approximately 160 kilometres east of the capital city of Prague, is currently a small town with a population of around 9,000 inhabitants. It boasts several attractions – whether it is the Baroque town hall, the Marian Column with Baroque fountains, or the preserved massive walls with a length of 1,220 meters, surrounding the entire historic core of the town, which is one of the best-preserved fortifications in Central Europe. Another curious element is the historical-geographical context of the town, which takes us back to the early Middle Ages.

The area of the town of Polička is located on the border of two historical lands of the Bohemian Kingdom – Bohemia in the west and the Margraviate of Moravia, geographically located in the east – in an area called the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands. The altitude of the town is about 550 meters and the average annual temperature is around 5° C. It thus belongs to the wettest and coldest areas of the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands. It is therefore not a very hospitable and fertile landscape in which we would traditionally imagine the location of a medieval town. The soil here is also not among the most fertile, and the poor mountain fields were able to provide only the most necessary sustenance. There are also no fertile river embankments. It is therefore not surprising that we do not find evidence of prehistoric settlement here. There are only scant reports of prehistoric population groups passing rarely (Konečný, K., and Růžička, J., 2010).

The territory of today's area of Polička has been covered by a dense forest since prehistoric times, which formed the **land border** between Bohemia and Moravia and at the same time represented a natural wall against the invasion of enemies. It is therefore quite logical that the Bohemian dukes of the early Middle Ages forbade its deforestation. However, the dense forest belt made the necessary trade – both foreign and domestic – difficult. For that reason, **trade routes** were established throughout the state, which most often went through natural passes and valleys. On the paths of trade routes that crossed the land border of Bohemia and Moravia, **land gates** grew up, which served as defence devices for traders or potential enemies at suitable places when crossing the border itself. At such a gate there was usually a smaller guard castle with a garrison and a commander, to whom all border guards in a given section of the border forest were subject. As arises from the above, their task was to maintain the passability of the trade route and the crossing of the land border, as well as to ensure the safety of the merchants and to pacify possible enemy incursions. At this stage, it was also allowed to cut down the border forest in a suitable places, so that small farms could be created here, which would serve as a sufficient hinterland for the local garrison and their families. The town of Polička was established in the 1260s on the path of one of the trade routes, which also crossed the land border. This so-called **Trstenice Route** connected Bohemia, Moravia, and Hungary. The connection of Bohemia with foreign

lands has been a known fact since prehistoric times, and thanks to historical sources we know that there was considerable traffic on trade routes (Dudek, K., 1939).

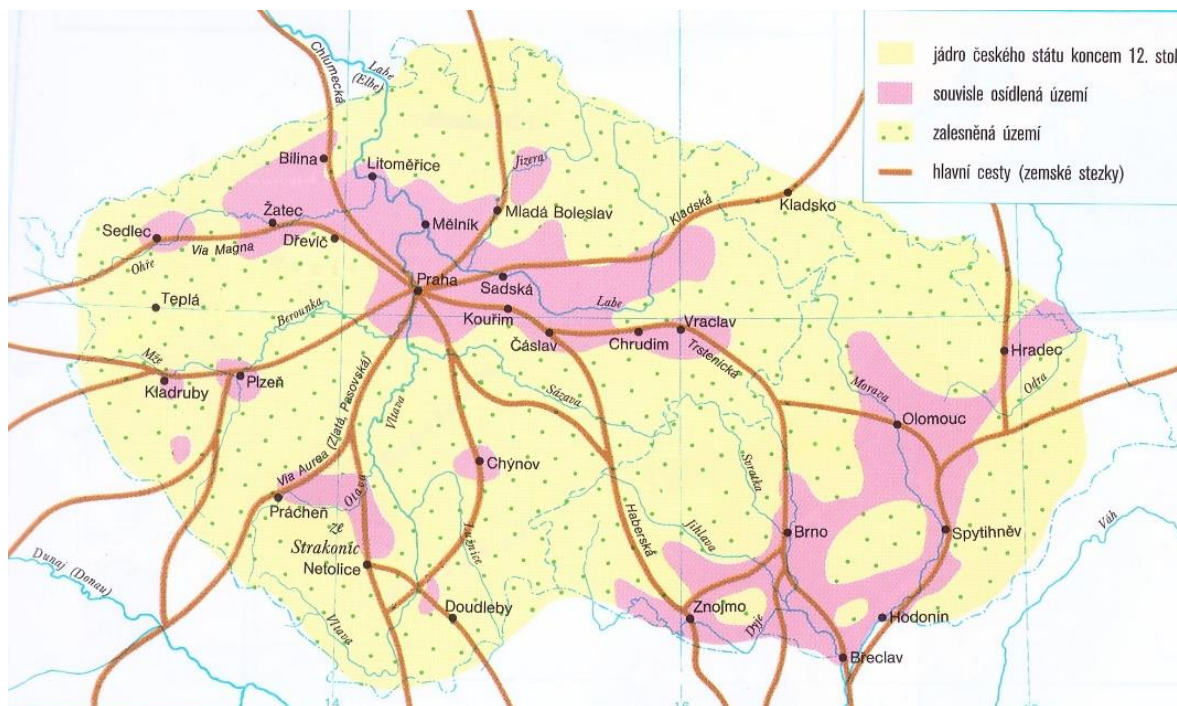


Fig. 01 Map of the most important trade routes in the 12th century. Source: adopted from Semotanová, E., Ježková, D. & Petráček, J., 1998. Yellow: Core of the Bohemian state at the end of the 12th century, Pink: continuously settled territory, Yellow with Green Dots: forest area, Brown Lines: The main routes (land routes)

The area of the future Polička district belonged to the natural catchment area of the nearby town of **Litomyšl**. The Bohemian duke and later king Vladislav II (reign 1140–1172) had a **Premonstratensian canonry** founded here, thanks to which there was a sharp revival of interest in the entire adjacent area and its potential economic use. Thanks to the Litomyšl Premonstratensians, the colonisation activity was begun, extending to the area of the future Polička. We already learn about the gradual cultivation of the region from the Premonstratensian privilege, issued in 1167. In this charter we also find for the first time a mention of the name of the area of cultivated meadows, which was called “*Na Políčkách*” (Šimůnek, R., et al., 2019).

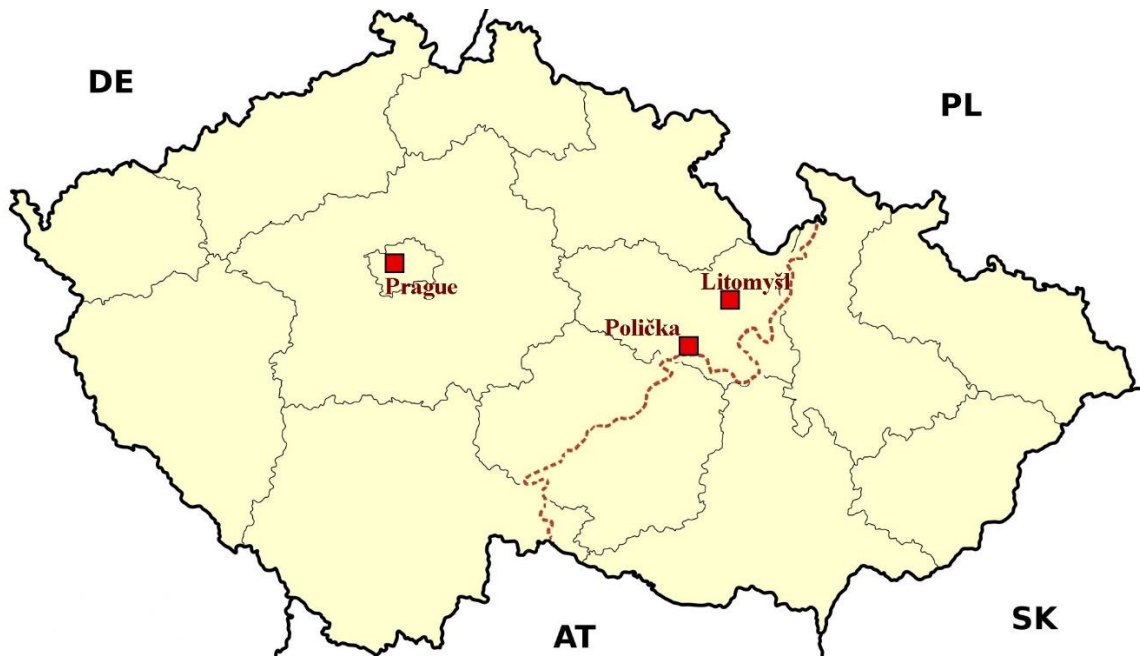


Fig. 02 Geographical situation of the capital city of Prague, Litomyšl and Polička with the Bohemian-Moravian land route highlighted.  
Source: own treatment.

The gradual colonization of the Polička district gave rise to several smaller settlements around 1200. However, the entire area most likely still belonged to the Litomyšl canonry. It is highly likely that these settlements functioned in the context of the existence of the Trstenice Trade Route and the nearby border crossing – i.e., as the dwellings of local guards.

### 3.2. The founding of the royal town of Polička and its importance

We have to wait until **the 1260s** for the actual founding of the town, when Bohemian king Přemysl Otakar II acquired **land** from the Litomyšl Premonstratensians **in the territory of the border forest**, which was large enough for the foundation of a new royal town, even with the rural hinterland itself. This is how the Polička district was created, which in the north and northeast met the Litomyšl canonry's estates, from which it itself split off (Šimůnek, R., et al., 2019). The founding document of the town of Polička was issued in 1265. Like every town, Polička needed its locator, i.e., a person in charge of surveying and building the town. This became a certain Konrád from Lewendorf, who had already proven himself in the past. He was entrusted with the location of the village of Limberk, located not far from the future Polička. The creation of a new town was not always easy and in fact it was often a rather risky undertaking – especially in places that were not very suitable climatically and economically, as in the case of Polička itself. It was therefore necessary to first “test” the newly colonised territory by establishing a smaller village before the location of the royal town itself was undertaken. The nearby Limberk became such a test subject (Jílková, H., 2012). Its immediate proximity to the future royal town caused a mutual connection that continues to this day – Limberk became a permanent part of today's Polička in the form of its suburb in the east.

After the successful establishment of Limberk, **the location of Polička itself** was approached as a new royal town. The entire colonisation enterprise (including the adjacent rural hinterland) numbered around 800 hides, of which 50 hides belonged to the town itself (1 hide = approx. 20 hectares, so it was a large square of 150–160 km<sup>2</sup>). The urban layout itself was not significantly different from other emerging towns. Polička was founded by Bílý potok (White Stream) and had two suburbs, which today are connected to the former Limberk. The town was situated in an oval plan with a classic spacious square, a well-arranged street complex and an arrangement of house plots, which is essentially preserved to this day. The main streets led to the four town gates from the four corners of the trapezoidal square. The town conveniences also included meat and bread shops, four mills and a free tavern in Limberk (Šimůnek, R., et al., 2019).

Although the new settlers were promised many advantages, such as the protection of local craftsmen and merchants from close competition, exemption from paying taxes for twenty years and the possibility of collecting fees on the land route, the entire project of the royal town struggled at the beginning with a lack of inhabitants. However, **the rural hinterland**, without which the town would not be able to survive, **was also built** along with the town itself. Soon the whole area began to be filled with other smaller settlements (Konečný, K., and Růžička, J., 2010). The town thus never arose as a solitary unit, but as a companion – as the centre of the entire newly established region. It was a well-regulated location, following the already established eastern fields of the village of Limberk and the western hinterland of the village of Kamenec (otherwise also known as Steindorf).

It follows from the above that the town of Polička became an **important and strategic geographical, political, and commercial point on the Czech-Moravian border**. But it should also be emphasized that medieval towns had an important defensive, often military, function. This importance was greatly emphasized in Polička itself thanks to the construction of **town walls**, thanks to which the town became a kind of potential border fortress. For a long time, the fortification was only temporary – it was a simple wall with posts and a shallow ditch. It was not until the later 14th century that a massive stone fortification was built, preserved to today. The main rampart could boast a width of 2.5 metres and an original height of 10 metres (Konečný, J., Popelka, I. 2009). At a height of 8 meters, the masonry on the inner side of the wall gave way to create a walkway, protected by walls and battlements, which provided sufficient space for the movement of the town's defenders. This battlement was later walled up and replaced by embrasures. The wall surrounded the entire oval plan of the town. In addition, the entire wall was strengthened by a total of nineteen semi-cylindrical bastions allowing shooting, four town gates, which are unfortunately completely non-existent today, and two so-called posterns, i.e. smaller side passages (Šimůnek, R. et al., 2019). As already mentioned above, the town fortifications still exist and are currently registered along with other Polička monuments on the List of National Monuments of the Czech Republic (Razím, V., 2020).



Fig. 03 Part of the Gothic town fortification and the church of St James. Source: <https://www.policka.org/detail/81/o-meste/pamatky/Goticke-opevneni#images-10> (accessed on 24/01/2024).

Due to its convenient location near the land border and trade route, it also needed to provide a safe haven for passing merchants and other travellers. Such a place became the **free tavern in neighbouring Limberk**, which was not only a catering facility, but also an accommodation facility, which also had stables and a forge. When asked why such a facility was not located directly in the royal town, there is a simple explanation. As already mentioned above, the location of neighbouring Limberk took place before the foundation of Polička itself. At that moment, it was endowed with the so-called **mile right**, which guaranteed the impossibility of competition in the area of the same business within a radius of about eleven kilometres. Unfortunately for Polička, this radius extended to the territory of the town itself, and therefore it was not possible to have its own tavern.



From the very beginning of its existence, Polička was also closely connected with the nearby **Svojanov Castle**, located approximately 20 kilometres southeast of the town. The castle itself was not built later than 1265 – that is, at the same time when Polička was founded. This castle became another guard fortress that was supposed to watch over the Bohemian-Moravian border (Jílková, H., 2012). It can be said that its disadvantageous location indirectly caused the construction of Polička's unique fortification today, because Svojanov Castle was built on a very difficult-to-access rock spur above the river valley, which made its role in guarding the trade route and collecting fees at the land border very difficult. For that reason, its guarding role was significantly strengthened by the construction of Polička's rampart belt (Šimůnek, r., et al., 2019).

Let's also turn our attention to the still open question of the existence or non-existence of **Polička Castle**. An earlier interpretation talks about the possibility of the existence of a wooden guard castle, which was supposed to stand at the northwestern so-called Starohradská (Old Castle) Gate. The castle was to be strengthened by a rampart with a circular wall and was to serve as a base for the needs of the commander of the local land guard. In the 1420s, it was supposed to have been burnt down during an attack by Hungarian troops and was never to have been rebuilt (Dudek, K., 1939). The considerations on the existence of Polička Castle is based on an entry in the town books from 1463, in which the location "old castle" appears. However, today is difficult to determine what this "old castle" might have been. No visible remains have been preserved and archaeological research cannot be carried out in a densely built-up area. However, a more recent interpretation assumes that if such a building stood here, it could have been a building from the time of the Hussite Wars (1419–1436) and it could have been a strengthening of the fortifications with more significant fortresses. We can only say with certainty that it was undoubtedly not a royal castle (Šimůnek, E., et al., 2019).

### 3.3. The possible "pre-locational" origin of Polička

Despite all the facts mentioned above, the question arises whether Polička was built on a so-called green field site - i.e. without any connection to the previous settlement, or whether it grew on the earlier foundations of a pre-location settlement. We should not forget the fact that garrisons of the land guard were active on the territory of the deep land forests. Logically, we could therefore come to the assumption that even on the territory of the future royal town there was a dwelling or even a smaller settlement, serving such a garrison as a safe haven and economic hinterland ensuring their daily sustenance. This theory is, for example, partially supported by the fact that the street blocks around the church of St James in the very historic centre of Polička show a much less regular and, at first glance, planned structure than the rest of the inner town. It is therefore possible that this part of Polička existed in a certain form even before the actual founding of the royal town itself and was then simply implemented into the inner spaces of the town walls. In this context, the founding charter of the town of Polička uses the formulation about "a new planting of our town Na Políčkách" (in the original "novellam plantacionem nostre civitatis in Policzek") (Šebánek, J., Dušková, S., 1974).

Another striking element is the very visible anomaly of one of the main streets that lead from the main square to one of the former town gates. Although the other three main streets lead from the main square to the former town gates in straight lines, the road to the so-called Litomyšl Gate is inexplicably and unnecessarily curved and continues in a straight line just before the gate towards the former agricultural parcels, which was created at the same time as the town itself. This too can be a trace of a possible pre-locational origin, as there is no other logical explanation why such a senseless curvature of the main street would exist in an otherwise strictly well-planned town (Jílková, H., 2012).

We now turn our attention to the actual founding charter of the town of Polička from 1256. Its specific text reads: "As we have stated, of the fields and villages, which adjoin the named city Na Políčkách within one mile and are estimated at more than eight hundred hides, fifty hides will be assessed to the town, the holders of which will have full freedom in everything and perfectly for eighteen years. Then the inhabitants of the villages and fields already cultivated within the radius of the often-mentioned mile, who will belong to the town on Polička, will pay fees and allowances as the freedom from them that was given to them, when newly founded, shall end. And those fields, with fields yet to be grown and uncultivated, which from the time they are first sown, for twenty years shall enjoy full freedom, and shall be attached to the villages situated at the distance of a mile from the

oft-mentioned town of Polička, and belonging to it, as we have stated.” (Šebánek, J., Dušková, S., 1974). The fact that the land that was previously cultivated was to be exempted from payments for a period of eighteen years, while the newly cultivated land for twenty years suggests that the actual foundation of the town could have already taken place before 1265, when the founding charter of Polička was issued (Konečný, S., 2000). Despite these small clues, however, archaeological research is silent about other traces, so the question of the pre-locational existence of Polička remains unanswered.

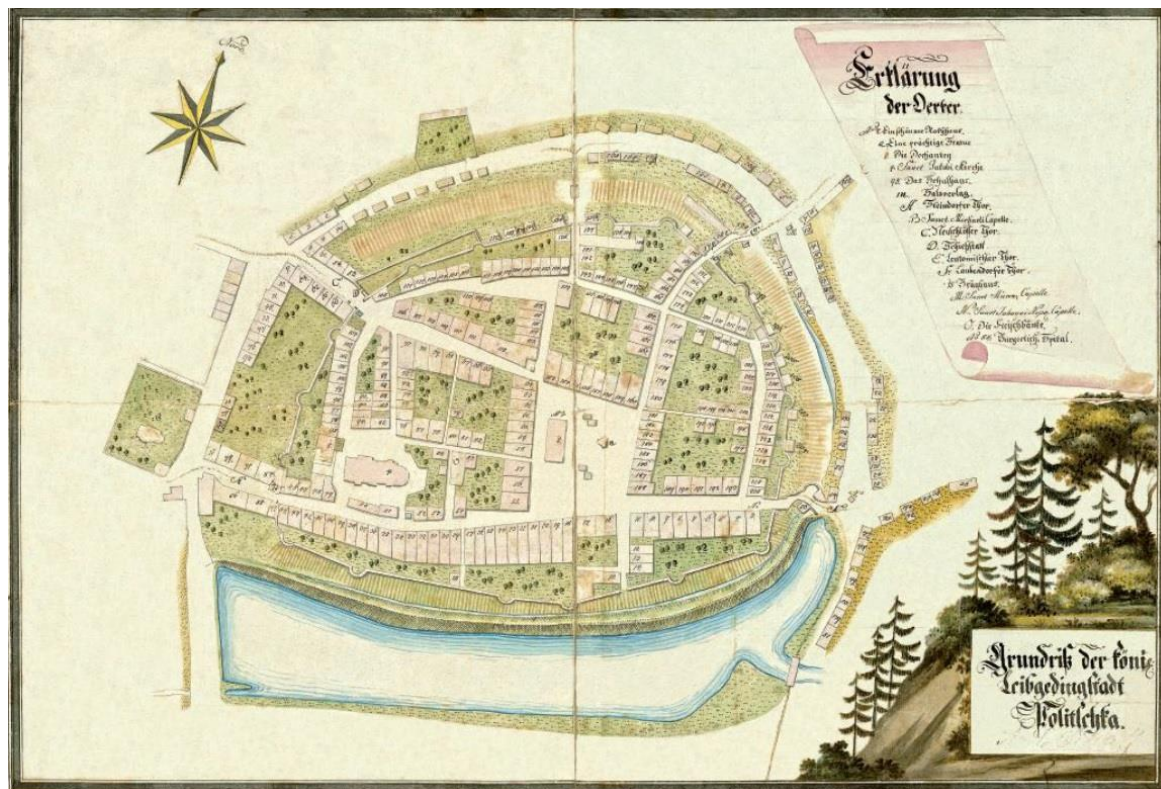


Fig. 04 Plan of the Town of Polička from 1807. Source: Šimůnek, R., et al., 2019).

## Conclusion

The question of Bohemian and Moravian medieval towns is one of the traditional topics of the Czech research scene, which is constantly expanding thanks to smaller local and regional studies. This study aimed to shed light on the emergence of early towns on the territory of the former Bohemian Kingdom with a closer focus on the time of Přemysl Otakar II, during whose reign the medieval urban network was completed. With minor exceptions, it has survived to the present day. Today, the town of Polička is not one of the important towns of the Czech Republic, but it offers many concrete examples that demonstrate the urban policy of the aforementioned King Přemysl Otakar II. The still preserved town walls, which are listed on the List of National Monuments of the Czech Republic, also ensured the perfect preservation of the original historic town core, which is a beautiful demonstration of Bohemian urbanism of the 13th century. Despite the many facts mentioned above, however, the question remains whether Polička was founded by Přemysl Otakar II on a green field site, or whether it was created in connection with an earlier settlement or the economic hinterland of the border guard. However, during the long centuries of its existence, it was certainly an important strategic point of the Bohemian-Moravian urban network.

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