



1. Bolków, western frontage of Market Square with high porticoes. Photo: R. Gliński

# High porticoes

## A phenomenon from Bolków, Kłodzko and Świdnica in a European context\*

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At the foot of the castle hill in Bolków (Bolkenhein) the western frontage of the long Market Square stretches with burgher buildings of unusual features. The porticoes of the town-house, an element in itself extremely rare in Silesia today, were placed high, even several metres above the level of the Market Square, so that the portico passage became a kind of long loggia of this frontage [Fig. 1].

Urszula Czartoryska, the author of the first post-war historical-architectural study of Bolków, considered this feature to be characteristic of the town<sup>1</sup>. Certainly it is today the only preserved solution of this type in Silesia, but was it always so and was it unique on a European scale? A row of porticoes on the second storey, a staircase running directly from the square to the porticoes and a variety of façade designs gave the frontage – over which the medieval fortress towers – a unique image unlike the monotonous frontages of many towns in the region.

Today's frontages of most towns in Silesia and the Kłodzko Land form rows of town-houses with 19th and early 20th c. architectural features. They appeared as a result of building activity associated not only with the greater financial potential of the bourgeoisie, the desire for modernisation by following currently popular architectural styles, but also as a consequence of the introduction of building regulations, including fire regulations<sup>2</sup>. Brick buildings with their ridge to the front, or covered with flat roofs, with classicising, neo-style or eclectic façade designs, replaced or transformed earlier structures – abun-



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<sup>1</sup> U. Czartoryska, *Studium historyczno-architektoniczne m. Bolkowa*, Wrocław 1956, p. 10, NID (Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa – National Institute of Cultural Heritage) Archive in Wrocław, Ref. PDNH12.

<sup>2</sup> See R. Eysymontt, *Przemiany pierzei ulicznych w miastach śląskich na podstawie źródeł pisanych, kartograficznych i ikonograficznych*, "Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej" 1999, No. 1/2; *idem*, *Pruska reorganizacja miast (Stadtretablissement) na Śląsku*, [in:] *Retablissement. Preußische Stadtbaukunst in Polen und Deutschland = Urbanistyka pruska w Polsce i w Niemczech*, Ed. Ch. Baier [et al.], Berlin 2016.



<sup>3</sup> As in the case of the great fire of Ząbkowice Śląskie in 1858, see *Atlas historyczny miast polskich*, Vol. 4: *Śląsk*, Ed. R. Czaja, No. 17: *Ząbkowice Śląskie*, Ed. M. Młynarska-Kaletynowa, Toruń 2016, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> R. Eysymontt, *Przemiany...*, p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> See "Mitteilungen des Geschichts- und Altertums-Vereins für die Stadt und das Fürstentum Liegnitz" 1906/1908, No. 2, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Bielsko-Biała, Bolków, Chełmsko Śląskie, Cieszyn, Gryfów Śląski, Jawor, Jelenia Góra (mostly reconstructed), Kamienna Góra, Kowary, Łądek-Zdrój, Leśna, Lubawka, Lubomierz, Mieroszów, Międzyzlesie, Nowa Ruda, Opole (porticoes in the block of buildings in the middle of the market square), Stawków, Sulików, Sułów (last surviving market square house), Tarnowskie Góry, Wałbrzych. In Mirsk the porticoes have been walled up and are now hidden within the town-houses, in Polkowice the northern frontage with porticoes is a contemporary creation, although in the 18th c. the market was surrounded by timber porticoes. Gliwice's porticoes were mostly built in the 1950s. We have omitted here towns with single porticoes, particularly popularly created in the 19th and 20th c. on the corners of squares and street intersections. Sulików and Sułów are now villages, but in their history they also had the status of towns.

dant in variety of building materials – by eliminating many examples of timber and brick buildings. Narrow, gable-roofed town-houses, prominent in the Friedrich Bernhard Werner's 18th c. city views, and still preserved today in a few examples, such as the market houses in Ziębice (Münsterberg) (No. 42), Paczków (Patschkau) (No. 34/35) or Gryfów Śląski (Greiffenberg) (No. 4), were disappearing from the landscape. Large-scale transformations of buildings, often preceded by great urban fires<sup>3</sup>, also provided an opportunity to regulate the communication systems by straightening or widening the most important streets, including the width of one of the characteristic elements of burgher buildings, i.e. the portico row. This is probably how Strzegom (Striegau) lost its porticoes, extending before along the majority of its streets, where the demolition process was said to have begun in 1833 in connection with the "beautification of the street by laying paving"<sup>4</sup>. Another way of liquidating the portico rows was to enclose and incorporate them into the ground floors of buildings, as illustrated by the examples of Chełmsko Śląskie (Schömberg), Duszniki-Zdrój (Bad Reinerz) and Gryfów Śląski (Greiffenberg). Besides all this, the porticoes of houses, that had a status balancing between private and public ownership, that influenced the functioning of the city by concentrating communication and commerce, had always been a controversial element for residents and local authorities, who were confronted with a conflict of different interests, including the expansion of the usable space of the houses.

While we cannot indicate for particular Silesian centres the time when porticoes appeared, we know that in some places their demolition was initiated already in the 14th century. This is evidenced by a document issued on 21 August 1384 by Duke Ruprecht on the liquidation of porticoes in Legnica (Liegnitz)<sup>5</sup>. According to the text of this decree, all owners of houses at the square were obliged to remove the porticoes within three years by walling them up, thus incorporating the former portico passage into houses. However, there is no information in the referenced document about the motivation for this decision. It may be that some of the porticoes were timber-framed, so the intention was to rid off the element posing the risk of fire. Another important argument may have been of an aesthetic nature, as the gables were ordered to be built according to the Wrocław pattern. There may also have been a desire to concentrate trade in facilities specifically designed for this purpose. It seems, however, that in each duchy and centre the decision to introduce and eliminate this design element was taken independently at different times.

Today porticoes are unique elements in the landscape of towns in Silesia and the Kłodzko Land, combining great historical and aesthetic value. Built in different periods, they still exist in larger or smaller concentrations in over twenty towns in the Lower Silesian, Silesian and Opole Voivodships<sup>6</sup>. This collection, given the number of towns in the area, is poor, and the considerable dispersion of cen-

tres with porticoes adds to the feeling of their sporadic nature. From analysis of historical and iconographic sources, we can say that there were many more such centres, and in the 18th c. they were also quite common in villages. At the present stage of research we can conclude that there were porticoes in at least 51 other centres within the voivodeships mentioned, and this is certainly not a definitive state.

Most of the towns with preserved portico buildings today are small mountain or sub-mountain centres. It may be that porticoes survived in some of them because of the low investment potential in the 19th and 20th c., but certainly the inhabitants of centres with varied terrain appreciated porticoes providing protection for passers-by, craftsmen and merchants not only from rain and sun, but, for example, from flowing rainwater, in mountainous terrain becoming rushing streams. The porticoes were also suitable for correcting the terrain by elevating the portico walkway more or less, as can be seen, for example, in Nowa Ruda (Neurode). The persistence of the idea of porticoes in mountainous areas is not, by the way, specific to the area in question alone. Despite the presence of portico buildings also in European upland and lowland towns, such as Westphalian Münster or Pomeranian Gniew, a significant number of centres with preserved buildings with this feature remain linked to a mountainous or sub-mountainous environment.

In some centres, especially those located on steep slopes, a specific type of portico was sometimes constructed, elevated above the level of the square or street, and the extent of this elevation depended on the terrain. In this way, the front walls of the storeys under the porticoes were sometimes completely exposed, transforming from the basement into the ground floor, and the floors of the porticoes were even elevated several metres above the ground level, creating peculiar loggias in the continuous rows of buildings along streets and squares. From the area of Silesia and the Kłodzko Land we know of only one such preserved example (Bolków), of one we know from written and iconographic sources (Kłodzko), and of another from written accounts confirmed by architectural research (Świdnica). A somewhat more modest variant of this type of solution are terraced pavements without canopies or storeys covering them.

High porticoes as a specific type of this construction solution and terraced pavements are the subject of this article, in which we will present the oldest evidence of their occurrence in Silesia and the Kłodzko Land, their role in the urban fabric, the reasons for their creation, the construction solutions used, and finally we will list the surviving European examples.

We regard as high porticoes those structures in which the portico row is located high enough that access to the rooms below is possible from the square or street side. We thereby wish to distinguish them from the more numerous slightly elevated portico floors, whose front wall contained at most a small window. With regard to the ter-



2. Visualisation of aerial scanning data for the town of Bolków (PZGiK<sup>10</sup> collection), elaborated by M. Mackiewicz. Arrows mark the frontage with high porticoes

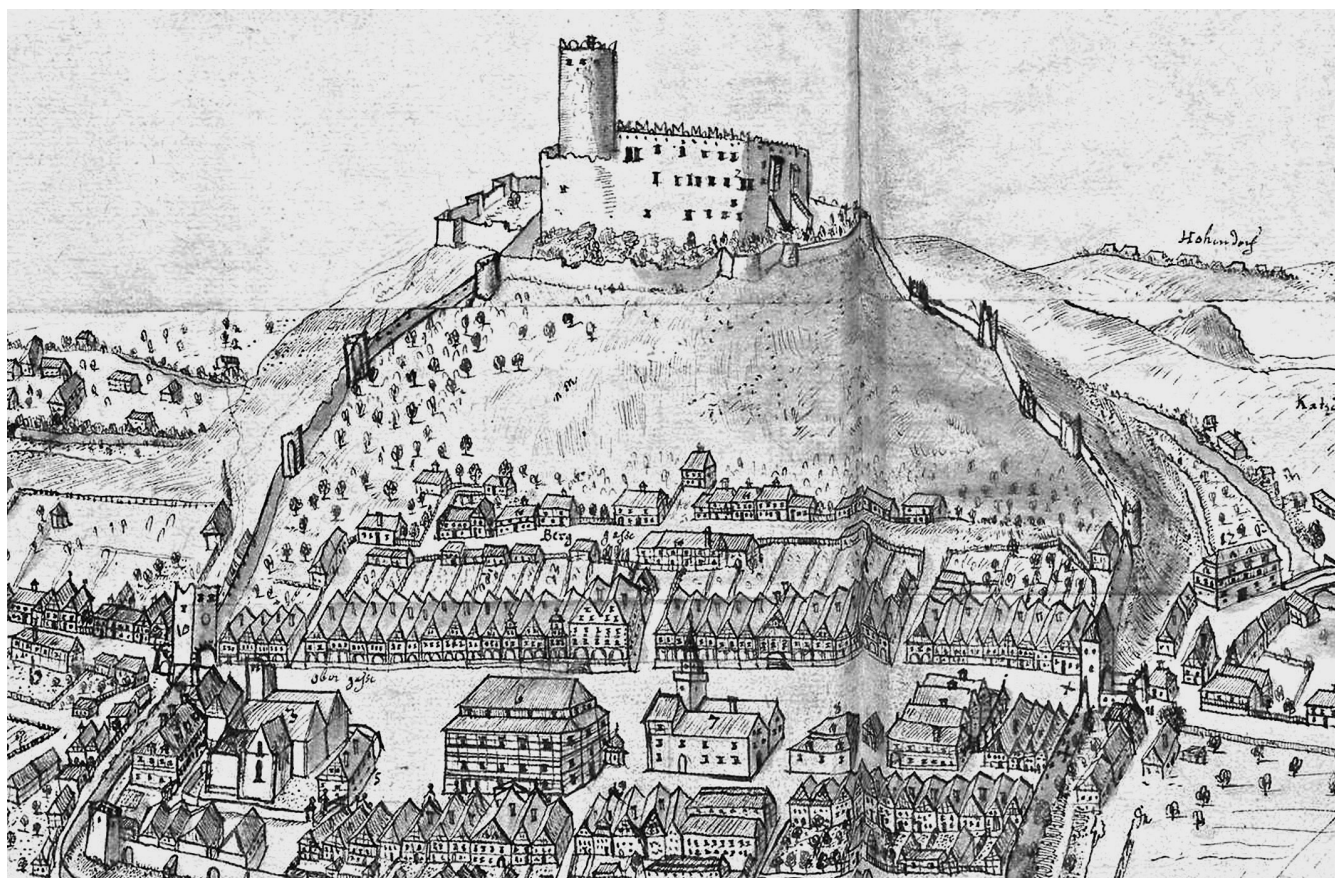


<sup>7</sup> M. Chorowska, Cz. Lasota, *Średnio-wieczne podcienia i przedproża na Śląsku*, "Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej" 1999, No. 1/2.

<sup>8</sup> On the term "Beischlag" see P. Korduba, *Patrycjuszowski dom gdański w czasach nowożytnych*, Warszawa 2005, pp. 107–108, 180–185; P. Oberg, *Der Beischlag des deutschen Bürgerhauses*, Danzig 1935. I thank Zofia Maciakowska for her advices on the issue of stoops.

<sup>9</sup> See K. Mühlke, *Ausbauten, Utluchten und Beischläge in der Küstenländern der Nordsee und Ostsee* (3), "Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung" 1919, No. 65, s. 385–389.

raced pavements, we deliberately avoid the term "stoop", which is sometimes used, for example, in relation to the elevated pedestrian walkways in Świdnica<sup>7</sup>. The term has become strongly attached in literature and consciousness to frontal constructions known above all from Gdańsk, Elbląg or Toruń, referred to in German as *Beischlag*, which are a different architectural phenomenon<sup>8</sup>. Such stoops are directly linked to the house, enable communication with the high basement and cellar, and have been for some time a kind of private terrace where family and social life took place. They are separated from the neighbouring stoops and therefore do not provide a continuous pedestrian connection along the façades of the houses. This last feature, on the other hand, became the reason for the demolition of the stoops over time, as they impeded free access to the shops located in the ground floors of the buildings and narrowed the walkways. It was only for conservation reasons that these structures were sometimes rebuilt to create a compromise between the convenience of passers-by and the preservation of historic additions<sup>9</sup>.



3. Perspective view of Bolków, F. B. Werner, *Topographia Silesiae* [...], p. 384, fragment; from the collection of Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ref. XVII. HA, Rep. 135, No. 526-2

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In Bolków, mentioned at the beginning, the portico sequence of the western frontage of the market, which starts its southern end already from the junction of Rycerska and Kraszewskiego Streets, begins smoothly almost from the ground level. Having climbed only a few steps, one reaches the portico, which stretches at the foot of the castle hill in a slight curve following the course of the frontage, providing only a gentle slope towards the north, thus levelling the significant difference in level of the square itself, which descends sharply in that direction [Fig. 2].

A slightly larger rise, which the stairs were built to overcome, is located between the houses numbered Market 7 and 8. The portico is not disrupted by the connecting passage between the houses at 9 and 11 Rycerska Street to the church, because this gap was walled up to the level of the floor of the portico, and previously, as can be seen from archive photographs, there were wooden platforms here. Per-



<sup>10</sup> Państwowy Zasób Geodezyjny i Kartograficzny – State Geodetic and Cartographic Resources.



<sup>11</sup> F. B. Werner, *Topographia Silesiae (geographisch-historische Beschreibung der Provinz Schlesien) mit handgezeichneten Stadtplänen und Ansichten*, Vol. 3: *Münsterberg-Frankenstein, Schweidnitz, freie Standesherrschaften*, p. 384, in the collection of Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ref. XVII. HA, Rep. 135, No. 526–2.

<sup>12</sup> Remarkably, the documentation stored in the archives of the National Heritage Institute in Wrocław also shows the layouts of town-houses that no longer exist.

haps this was also done from the beginning, and it is possible that this was the case at the location of the next break between the buildings, namely Zamkowa Street ascends steeply the castle hill. Analysing Friedrich Bernhard Werner's view, however, we notice that in the first case the draughtsman drew a platform between the porticoes, while at Zamkowa Street he did not, suggesting a clear end to their course at this point [Fig. 3]<sup>11</sup>.

Access from the Market Square to the portico row is now also provided by densely placed staircases perpendicular to the façades of the town-houses, although the aforementioned Werner showed only one such solution per section delimited by a block of buildings. They must therefore have been mostly built after the mid-18th century.

Under the floor of the portico there are rooms accessible – in the section of it highest elevation – through doorways from the square, in the lower parts usually equipped merely with windows and usually serving the same function as cellars. An exemplary room of this type, associated with the town-house at Rynek 4, is built of rubble stone and covered with a barrel vault. Today, secondarily divided into small cells, it has a total depth of approx. 10.5 m from the front wall. The depth of the lower room is such that it extends not only under the portico itself, but also includes the first part of the building behind it. In its rear wall there is a doorway framed by a portal closed with a semi-circular arch, behind which there is a stone winding staircase leading to the interior of the building on the upper floor. This type of room connected with the interior of houses by corridors and stairs is common in Bolków, which is evidenced by the preserved documentation from the 1950s, but it is impossible without architectural research to determine whether this connection with the house was original<sup>12</sup>. This space may have maintained a kind of functional autonomy in relation to the house while being accessible from the street or the square, and thus may have been used by leaseholders or owners other than the householders. Due to the land rising towards the west, “cellars” were also sometimes made in the rear part of the buildings, and their floors were at the level of the floors of the portico, and it is likely that these were the proper storage areas for the occupants of the house.

Nowadays, leaving this long section of portico buildings and going northwards, one can cross the steps at the beginning of Zamkowa Street and enter another section of the portico row, which was, however, already built after 1945. Previously, this section had elevated terraces in front of the façades of the town-houses, whose successive portions corresponding to the width of the individual houses, due to the sloping terrain, were connected to each other and to the level of the market square by steps to ensure continuity of communication. When we speak of post-war portico houses refer to the formerly existing portico houses similar to those described above, but not as reconstructions but as creations in the form of modern blocks provided

with porticoes. The former buildings in this section were depicted in the mid-18th c. by Werner [Fig. 3]. These were mostly wooden portico houses, probably replaced by brick ones at the end of the 18th c., but which were also porticoed. This is evidenced by the walled-up portico parts in the now no longer existing town-houses, which were replaced by blocks of flats after the war<sup>13</sup>. The walling-up must not have taken place until after 1830, because in the engraving of that year this section of the buildings at the market square still resembles the one discussed above with the high portico row and the stairs leading up to it<sup>14</sup>.

From the second half of the 18th until the 20th c., the town square houses of Bolków were subject to far-reaching alterations. What we can consider, without invasive architectural research, to be the remains of buildings older than the second half of the 18th c., are usually only stone vaulted cellars, perhaps even of medieval origin. At least those covered by barrel vaults with pointed arches (Rynek 6, the non-existent Rynek 3/11, 15, 16, 18) can be regarded as such, and the sharp-arched portal in the cellar of the house at 11 Rycerska Street<sup>15</sup> may be the clearest evidence of this. It is possible that the sandstone pillar of circular cross-section with a straight-cut base and head supporting the two arches of the portico in the town square house No. 6 could be of Renaissance origin. The possible detail of the façades hidden in the porticoes was destroyed during the construction of new shopfronts in the 20th century. So far we do not know of any historical sources helpful in determining the time of the appearance of porticoes in Bolków either. It is possible that wooden portico houses, similar to those known from Werner's view, existed in the late Middle Ages and, as partially brick-built, petrified the buildings as early as the 16th and 17th c., although eventually, much later, permanent materials displaced wood from the structure. As late as the end of the 18th c., wooden or mixed wood and brick constructions were still in use in Bolków, as evidenced by the portico houses in Jaworska Street, one of which, no longer existing, no. 11, had a portal with the date 1791 written on it<sup>16</sup>.

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In 1380, a transaction was recorded in the Kłodzko town book in which Wenczlaw, son of Havel, stepson of Nikil Zumer, relinquished all rights to a house and a plot of land located on the corner by the castle hill, seen on the left if you go towards the castle<sup>17</sup>. He also relinquished to Petro, the town scribe, the "*archen vnder dem hause*". This is an interesting document for our consideration for various reasons. Firstly, it makes it possible to locate this house with a high degree of probability in today's topography of the town, which, given the sparsity of the locational formulas used in medieval town books, is



<sup>13</sup> See M. Kutzner, *Studium historyczno-architektoniczne domów rynkowych nr 13–17 w Bolkowie*, Wrocław 1958, NID Archive in Wrocław, Inv. PDNH 290.

<sup>14</sup> See *ibidem*, Fig. 4.

<sup>15</sup> See U. Czartoryska, *op. cit.*, s. 31.

<sup>16</sup> See *ibidem*, s. 29.

<sup>17</sup> We know the contents of this book thanks to the registers published in *Das älteste Glatzer Stadtbuch 1324–1412* (Ed. F. Volkmer, W. Hohaus, Habelschwerdt 1889, p. 125). The original book has unfortunately been lost.





4. Visualisation of air-scan data for the town of Kłodzko (PZGiK resource), elaborated by M. Mackiewicz. The white rectangle marks the location of the no longer existing houses with high porticoes



<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 79.

<sup>19</sup> Kłodzko town book covering the years 1412–1466 (hereinafter: KK2), State Archive in Wrocław, files of the town of Kłodzko, Ref. 2, p. 96.

usually difficult or even impossible. Secondly, it is seen from the record that the house was provided with an element that may relate to the subject of our article. Indeed, the question is what this *arche* was and how it was placed “under the house”.

In the document cited above, for the location of the property, not only the names of the owners of neighbouring properties were mentioned, as was usually done, but topographical indications were used. The expression “the corner seen when you go towards the castle” was noted even earlier than the cited document, in 1368<sup>18</sup>, while in 1416 “a house with a plot of land situated on the right side, fourth from the corner when you go from the Market Square towards Czeska Street,, was mentioned<sup>19</sup>. It can be seen, therefore, that this corner was a recognisable point of reference in the minds of the townspeople. The aforementioned Czeska Street, located at the foot of the castle hill, stretches from the north-west corner of the square to connect with the parallel Armii Krajowej Street, in the place of the former western town gate also known as Czeska Gate. In the oldest Kłodzko town

book the name of Czeska Street appeared for the first time in 1345, when Nikil, son of Cunat Huter, bought half a grzywna of annual rent from the Hof owned by Cunczil Swaczke and situated on this very street<sup>20</sup>. As one of the city's most important thoroughfares, it appeared frequently in subsequent town books. Moreover, the sources sometimes distinguished the northern built-up area of Czeska Street – “*am Burgberge*” / “*an der oberen Seite*”<sup>21</sup>, which reflects its location higher up on the slope of the castle hill. The 1380 document under consideration therefore referred to the intersection, important for the town, of the street leading to the castle hill, today's Grodzisko Street, with the eastern end of Czeska Street.

The second fragment of the analysed entry in the town book of interest to us is the one which mentions an *archen* under the house. We have noted this term also in other records of the medieval town books of Kłodzko in several contexts and variants. It appeared most frequently in connection with the house: six times its location was specified as “under the house”, twice “under the portico” (*lewbe*), once without any additional information. There was also once a record about an *arche* under the *Kaufkammer*, i.e. the Cloth Hall, and once about another under the Town Hall.

Władysław Dziewulski merely mentioned “the so-called arks (*Archen*)”, saying that they may have been the equivalent of sheds in which foodstuffs were sold<sup>22</sup>. The “*Arche*” in the dictionaries of historical German has many meanings, ranging from a vessel, a mill water chute, to a chest<sup>23</sup>. In our case, two options should be considered. The first is to accept the last-mentioned meaning, however, in the sense of a commercial device, rather a type of structure, perhaps a bench/stall, enabling commerce. The commercial use of the *arche*, or in another spelling *arke*, is also suggested, by their location in the Cloth Hall or Town Hall. A more debatable interpretation, but one worth presenting, would be to link it with the Latin *arcus*, and therefore an arch, a vault. In Münster, for example, along with *Gewölbe* and *Laube*, the term *Bogen* was used precisely to denote a portico – the interchangeable use of these terms is confirmed by two documents issued in connection with the same house: the one written in Latin in 1376 reads “*sub arcu*” and the German-language one from 1386 reads “*unter den Bogen*”<sup>24</sup>. In the oldest written Swiss-German sources, the terms “*Bogen*” or “*Schwibbogen*” were used in the context of the portico; from the 15th c. onwards, “*Laube*” also began to be used, from the 17th c. onwards “*Arkade*”<sup>25</sup>. In Kłodzko, *arche* would therefore mean the space itself, the interior, if it was also to be located “under the portico”, or it would mean the location literally under the house and under the portico, i.e. in the lowest vaulted storey, yet, as we will show further on, this was possible on Czeska Street.

Regardless of the interpretation adopted, it should be noted that of all the entries in the analysed town books of Kłodzko in which this term appeared in connection with the houses, their only certain lo-



<sup>20</sup> See *Das älteste...*, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> We do not know the original wording of these terms, but only those given in the registers in *Das älteste...* (pp. 50, 22).

<sup>22</sup> W. Dziewulski, *Kłodzko w XIV i początku XV wieku (ze szkicem sytuacyjnym)*, “*Sobótka*” 1957, No. 3, p. 455.

<sup>23</sup> *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities*, Version 01/23, <https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB> (access date: 16.01.2023).

<sup>24</sup> K.-H. Kirchoff, *Der Prinzipalmarkt mit Michaelisplatz, Gruetgasse, Syndikatgasse und Syndikatplatz*, Münster 2001, p. 30.

<sup>25</sup> U. Schröer, *Die Thuner Hochtrotoirs im städtebaulichen Kontext. Eine Studie zur Entstehungsgeschichte im Vergleich mit Bern, Burgdorf und Erlach*, Basel 2013, pp. 30–32.



<sup>26</sup> KK2, p. 349.

<sup>27</sup> Kłodzko town book covering the years ca. 1499–1528 (hereinafter: KK5), State Archive in Wrocław, files of the town of Kłodzko, Ref. 5, p. 93.

<sup>28</sup> KK5, p. 104.

<sup>29</sup> B. Oszczanowska [et al.], *Studium wartości kulturowych dla staromiejskiej dzielnicy Kłodzka wraz z Twierdzą Główną i przedmieściem południowym*, Wrocław 2003–2004, p. 50, typescript in NID archives, Inv. 165.

<sup>30</sup> Documentation held at the Herder Institut in Marburg, Inv. 242498, 242499.

cation is Czeska Street. Moreover, the possibility cannot be ruled out that the other cases with an unspecified location also concerned this very one. What is more, the houses in this street are the only ones with evidence of having had porticoes.

The porticoes themselves, outside the context of the arche, are noted only a few more times in the Kłodzko books. In 1464, Pet Teizner declared that Mrs Katherina Waleryn had repaid him in full “*das hawze ud hoffstat undir den lewben*”<sup>26</sup>. In 1504, Steffel Platner testified that he had sold “*das hauß und den hoen lewbn*” between Rymer’s and Nicolasch Bogener’s to Mat Wesetaln<sup>27</sup>, and a year later Paul Fisch stated that he had sold “*hauß und den hoen Lewbin*” located between Hefftelyn’s and Rymer’s to Wolfgang Goltsmed<sup>28</sup>. The term *hoen lewbn* – *hohe Laube*, i.e. high porticoes – that appears here is correlates with our knowledge of the row of portico houses located on the north side of Czeska Street [Fig. 4].

Thanks to preserved documentation and photographs from before 1945 and later, as the houses survived the World War II and were not demolished until the late 1950s<sup>29</sup>, we know that these were five adjoining town-houses with porticoes forming an elevated circulation route, founded on a high storey containing front rooms accessible by doorways from street level. In this way, the portico row provided a communication route to serve the high ground floors of the town-houses, rather than being part of an urban continuous communication system, thus differentiating itself from other known solutions in the region providing traffic flow. Similar to the Bolków town-houses is the level of elevation of the Kłodzko porticoes to a degree that ensures the exposure of the lower storey, which usually housed merely cellars [Fig. 5].

Luckily, we have drawing documentation of the no longer existing corner house at the former number 1, which allows us to establish the layout of its rooms as preserved in the year the measurements were taken, i.e. 1913<sup>30</sup> [Fig. 6].

We therefore know that the lowest storey, located within the outline of the portico, was covered by two bays of cross vaults and was only accessible from the Czeska Street side through a gate located in the right axis of the building. This space was provided with light through two windows closed with a semi-circular arch. An internal staircase led to further rooms situated in the depth of the house, which were actually already cellars due to the terrain rising towards the north. The independence of the front room is therefore evident, at least at the time of making the documentation. Above this was a portico, also with a two-bay cross vault, opening on the eastern side onto Grodzisko Street with two column-supported arcades, one of which was adjoined by stairs, the entrance to the portico. On the south side, the portico opened onto Czeska Street with two apertures of almost semicircular shape. A Renaissance portal led to the interior of the house from the portico, and light entered the front rooms

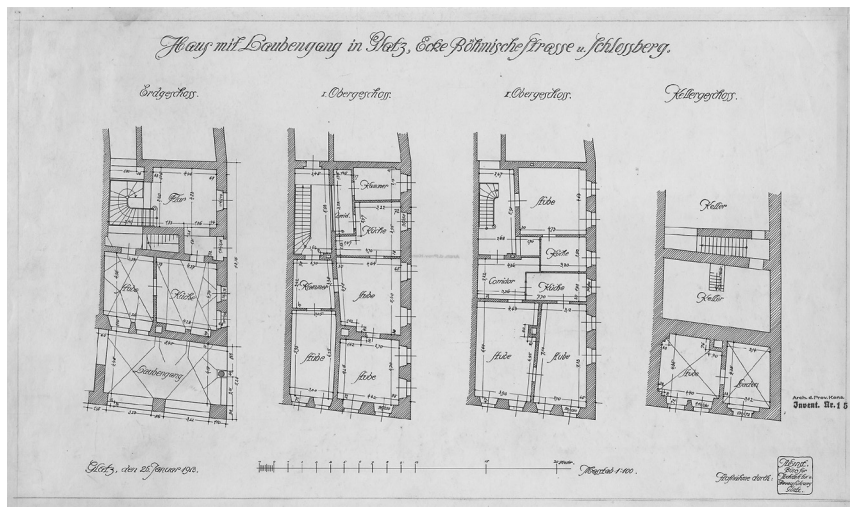


5. Kłodzko, high porticoes of Czeska Street, 1910–1914. Photo from: <https://polona.pl/item/glatz-lauben-an-der-bochemischen-strasse,Njk4ODE5MTk/0/#info:metadata> (access date: 4.04.2023)

through originally two windows (one perhaps enabling trading). The entrance that leads in from the east is probably the secondary one. In the second course of the house (behind the portico) there were two rooms, which may originally have been one large hall, the next one contained a staircase, the rear one had an almost square room and a staircase.

It is difficult to determine the time of construction of the portico buildings on Czeska Street. At least the 16th c. origin of the above-described corner building with the former number 1 is evidenced by Renaissance details visible on archival photographs, including the column of the corner house on the side of the street leading to the castle hill, supporting a portico with a capitol with a plaque bearing the date 1563. However, the cited document of the existence of an “ark” under the house in Czeska Street, probably exactly in the portico or room below, may suggest that portico houses on this site existed even as early as the 14th century.

6. Inventory of the house at 1 Czeska Street, from the collection of the Herd-  
er Institut, Inv. 242498, 242499

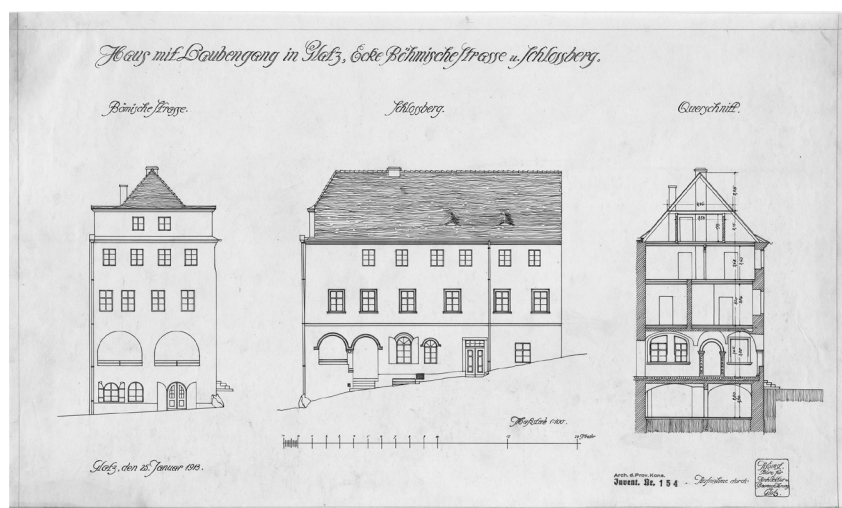


<sup>31</sup> O. Pompejus, *Album der Grafschaft Glatz oder Abbildungen der Städte, Kirchen, Kloster, Schlösser und Burgen derselben, von mehr als 150 Jahren, Glatz 1862*, Table 8.

Probably the oldest view of Czeska Street showing its northern frontage is the view, known only from a redrawing, made originally by Werner in 1737, and copied by Otto Pompejus and published around 1860 in an album depicting the most important towns and buildings in Klodzko County<sup>31</sup> [Fig. 7].

Interestingly, the portico houses in question are shown as if without any autopsy knowledge of the site. The portico row strangely breaks off to the east, and the corner building is not provided with a portico. Whether it was Werner who did not convey the peculiarities of the place well, and Pompejus merely copied faithfully, or whether it was the latter who misrepresented the image, it is difficult to say. However, another important detail is shown on this view, namely the high terraced pavement extending by the three market square houses numbered 5, 6 and 7 according to the former continuous numbering, roughly on the site of today's Rynek 20 and 20a buildings. This terrace is also marked on the town plans of 1763 and 1808, and on various views and photographs we see that below it there was an entire storey accessible from the square by doorways. In this way, the town-houses could maintain, despite the significant difference in terrain, the same level of above-ground storeys as the other buildings of the northern market square frontage. As in the case of the eastern end of the portico row of Czeska Street, here too the western end of the terrace ends abruptly with a low-running junction with Grodzisko Street.

Therefore, we know that in Klodzko porticoes existed perhaps as early as in the 14th c., and certainly in the 15th c., that in the next century at the latest, portico houses extended along Czeska Street, and in their successive versions survived until the late 1950s. From the beginning of the 16th c., “high porticoes” were also mentioned in the municipal records of Klodzko. For the 18th c., the iconography confirms the existence of porticoes that were unique due to the fact



that they were run high on an additional storey with a cellar-base-ment character. The meaning of the term *arche*, which appears in the sources, is unclear, but the context of its occurrence in the town's books allows us to hypothesise that this structure or the space itself was sheltered, since it was located under a portico or under a house. Thus, it could have referred either to a trading bench set in the portico or in the room below, or to these spaces themselves.

The description of porticoes as “high” in the sources is also not clear. In the 19th and 20th c., individual spaces in squares or streets were rather distinguished by the terms *ober* and *nieder*, but whether *hohe Laube* meant elevated porticoes like the ones that are the subject of this article, or whether their location at the highest point of the city caused them to be described in this way, it is difficult to say unequivocally<sup>32</sup>.

\* \* \*

High porticoes – *hohe Löbe* – were also mentioned in Świdnica's 14th c. historical sources<sup>33</sup>. This information was referred to by Małgorzata Chorowska and Czesław Lasota in the context of this town's medieval buildings of Pułaskiego Street, called *alta platea* in the 14th c. and Hoegasse (High Street) in the following century<sup>34</sup>. The northern side of the eastern section of this thoroughfare, from Menicka Street eastwards, is today provided with a terraced pedestrian walkway, which increases its elevation in an easterly direction alongside the descending terrain [Fig. 8].

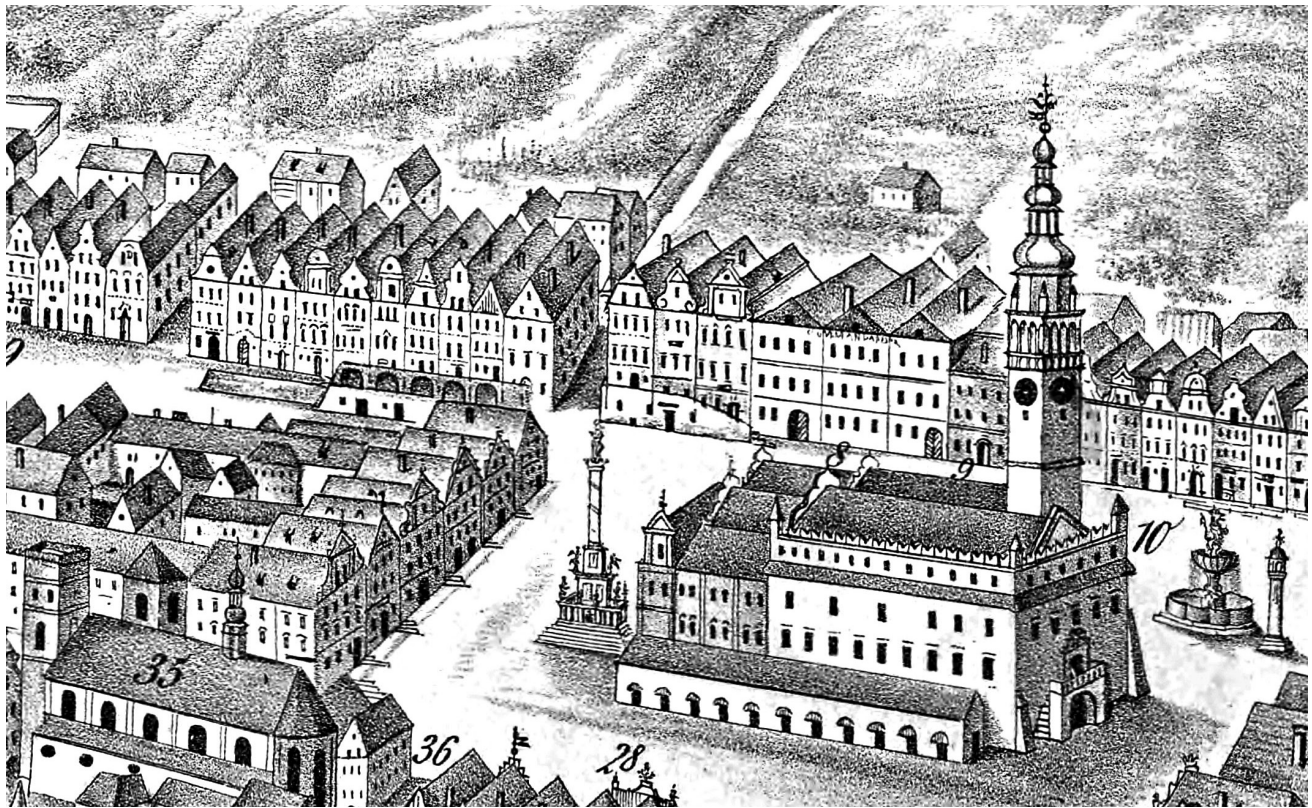
The front walls of these cellars, elevated high above street level, were provided with windows. As half of the terraced section of the pedestrian walkway is of two levels, it cannot be ruled out that the lower level partially obscured the actual outer wall of the original



<sup>32</sup> In Malbork, portico rows extending horizontally and on both sides of the main market street were described as “*niedere Lauben*” and “*hohe Lauben*” from at least the 19th century. In the 1823/1853 plan the sides “under the low arbours” and “under the high arbours” have been marked. See *Atlas historyczny miast polskich*, Ed. A. Czacharowski, Vol. 1: *Prusy Królewskie i Warmia*, No. 5: *Malbork*, Ed. R. Czaja, Toruń 2002, Table 12.

<sup>33</sup> See M. Chorowska, Cz. Lasota, *Kamienica mieszczańska w Świdnicy. Karczma i mieszkanie w XIII-XVIII w.*, Wrocław 2013, p. 44.

<sup>34</sup> See M. Goliński, *Wokół socjotopografii późnośredniowiecznej Świdnicy*, Part 1, Wrocław 2000, p. 99.



7. O. Pompejus, *Album der Grafschaft Glatz oder Abbildungen der Städte, Kirchen, Kloster, Schlösser und Burgen derselben, von mehr als 150 Jahren*, Glatz 1862, Tab. 8, fragment



<sup>35</sup> See M. Goliński, *Wokół socjotopografii późnośredniowiecznej Świdnicy*, Part 2, Wrocław 2003, pp. 100-101; M. Chorońska, Cz. Lasota, *Kamienica...*, pp. 32, 34-35.

structure, which perhaps originally had a larger number of windows and entrances leading to the cellars, as in the case of the highly elevated porticoes in Bolków and Kłodzko.

Archaeological and architectural investigations carried out in the area of Pułaskiego Street have made it possible to conclude that the base of these terraces is formed by vaulted medieval cellars, which enter into the open space of the street, most probably indicating the process of regulation of the building line, possibly the one carried out according to the ordinance of 1379<sup>35</sup>. During the aforementioned excavations, walls were uncovered which have been interpreted as a fragment of the roofing structure of the walkways running along both sides of the street. The interpretation that this row was roofed over was further strengthened by uncovered adobe floors instead of paving stones. However, it is uncertain whether these little walls should be associated with the oldest phase of half-timbered buildings with porticoes or with the construction of Late Gothic town-houses from the period of the regulation of street frontages, in front of which only terraced pavements were built. The question therefore remains as to

in which phase these *hohe Löbe* existed and what their construction was. As in the case of Kłodzko, here too we cannot exclude the possibility that the term was connected with the topography of the town. The former name of Pułaskiego Street – High Street – must in fact refer to the western high-level section of this road, and it may be that the porticoes located there were referred to in this way.

As can be seen from an analysis of the cellars beneath the elevated pavement, some of them are fronts of subterranean storeys extending underneath the house; in a few cases there are small rooms protruding in front of the facade of the houses. However, it is hard to say whether these cellars ever functioned as trading posts as they did in the previously discussed towns.

\* \* \*

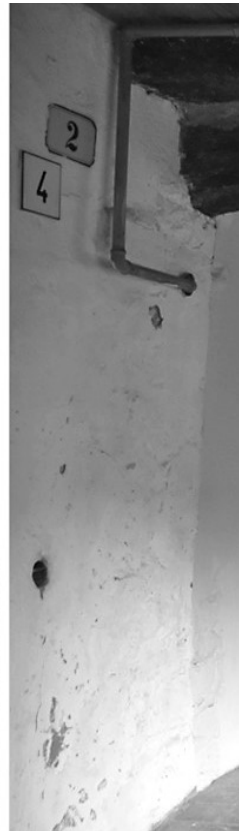
As we have demonstrated, high porticoes were not a peculiarity only of residential buildings in Bolków, they also existed in Kłodzko, and terrace pavements known from Świdnica, perhaps originally covered by some form of roofing, could also belong to this phenomenon.

However, such solutions can be found not only in Silesia and the Kłodzko Land. The closest to the mentioned examples, high porticoes can be found in Bielsko-Biała on Podcienie Street, and a little further away in Przemyśl. In the latter city, they are located in the southern frontage of the market square, which slopes steeply towards the north, and slightly less towards the east. The southern



8. Świdnica, terraced pedestrian walkway on Pułaskiego Street. Photo: M. Mackiewicz





9a-b. Brisighella, high porticoes at Piazza Guglielmo, view from outside (left) and portico passage - Via degli Asini (right). Photos: R. Gliński

frontage of the square is formed by two blocks of buildings, of which the eastern one, bordered by Aleksander Fredro, Adam Asnyk and Katedralna Streets, has retained most of its historic buildings. It is likely that originally all of the market square houses had porticoes, but only those on the south side were elevated high to soften the slope of the town square. The majority of these buildings are dated to the second half of the 16th c. or the beginning of the next century, which can be seen from the building technology used, as well as the Renaissance façade design and architectural details<sup>36</sup>. With the exception of No. 19, all of the town-houses in this row are also provided with stairs perpendicular to the façade, as well as cellar descents. The latter were probably only made in the 19th century. Thus, also in Przemyśl, high porticoes can be understood as those located highest within the market square and at the same time additionally elevated above the level of the square.

Probably the most spectacular solution, but also resulting from the clinging of the buildings to the hill, are the houses forming the northern frontage of Piazza Guglielmo Marconi in Brisighella in the Emilia-Romagna region, in the Italian province of Ravenna. From the side of the square, we see a very high ground floor with gates leading to the barrel vaulted sections of the ground floor, divided into individual sections by transverse arches or partition walls [Figs. 9a-b].



<sup>36</sup> See S. Żaryn, *Kamienice Przemyśla*, "Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki" 1956, No. 4; T. Frazik, *Badania architektoniczne kamienicy w Rynku 11 w Przemyślu. (Z badań terenowych nad zabytkowymi kamienicami Przemyśla)*, "Materiały i Sprawozdania Rzeszowskiego Ośrodka Archeologicznego za rok 1967" Vol. 7 (1971); *idem*, *Z badań nad najstarszymi kamienicami Przemyśla*, "Teki Komisji Urbanistyki i Architektury" Vol. 8 (1974); *idem*, *Galeazzo Appiani, murator przemyski z 2. połowy XVI i początku XVII stulecia*, "Rocznik Przemyski" Vol. 15/16 (1975).



<sup>37</sup> The functions of each room are described in an engraving by Romano dalla Verità used as promotional material for the village of Brisighella.

<sup>38</sup> Information for the Swiss area, unless otherwise noted, follow the comprehensive study by U. Schröer: *Die Thuner Hochtrottoirs im städtebaulichen Kontext. Eine Studie zur Entstehungsgeschichte im Vergleich mit Bern, Burgdorf und Erlach*, Heidelberg, Basel 2013.

Today they house shops, restaurants and garages, and in the past, according to the local reconstruction, they served as barns and storerooms in the rear part and as spaces for stables and carriage rooms in the front patios<sup>37</sup>. Beneath this there was also a cellar. The first floor spaces, used as stables and storerooms, were accessible through a portico gallery, known as Via degli Asini, the “donkey street”, which the cart-men living on the upper floors used to transport gypsum from a nearby quarry on the backs of donkeys. On the next floor there were kitchens and living rooms, and on the top floor – bedrooms.

Nowhere, however, did we find such an accumulation of elevated porticoes (Hochlauben) and walkways (Hochtrottoirs) as in Swiss towns. This country, indeed, abounds in a particular multiplicity and variety of constructions added to the façades of houses. The porticoes are most common in the canton of Bern, in Ticino and in eastern Switzerland<sup>38</sup>. The high porticoes, which are of interest to us, can be found in Bern, Erlach, Estavayer-le-Lac and Freiburg im Üechtland, and “high walkways” also exist in Thun, Burgdorf, Laupen and Avenches. Apart from this, we can notice in western Switzerland and Savoy an extremely distinctive element, termed “*dômes*”, and which may have, in appropriate variants, features of both of the above solutions. This was a specific construction in which wooden pillars



— 10. Thun, Obere Hauptgasse with terraced walkways. Photo: R. Gliński

set in front of the house façade at street or square level, stabilised, because of their height, by transverse beams, supported the projecting gables or top floors. To date, this solution has only survived in Moudon at 34 Rue du château, although before the demolitions carried out in the 18th and 19th c., these solutions were common in Geneva, where there are supposed to have been 152 of them. The first mention of *dômes* dates back to 1284, and Louis Blondel distinguishes four types of *dômes*, which represent their development from 1655 to the 18th c., and which are related to the height of the houses<sup>39</sup>. In Geneva houses with this feature, trade was carried out in shops located on the ground floor, but to increase the trading space, additional wooden market stalls were placed in front of the row of *dômes*'s pillars. *Dômes* served as protection from rain and wind for traders and shoppers in the market.

Structures with pillars supporting the projecting eaves were also applied in Unterseen, located at the far western shore of Lake Thun. Unlike the structure described above, the wooden supports here stood on a high brick terrace accessible to pedestrians by steps. Under this brick terrace, passageways were sometimes made leading to the other side of the house, in this case to the bank of the Aare river. Traces of such constructions may also be found within the 'high walkways' of the Obere Hauptgasse in Thun, so it is possible that these now uncovered structures were once provided with some form of roofing [Fig. 10].

Researchers into the history of these towns have come to some interesting conclusions about the origins of elevated porticoes and uncovered pavements, considering them to be the result of the regrading of streets and the consequent uncovering of former cellar areas, so that these became "street storeys", i.e. accessible from the lowered ground. This regrading must have occurred at a time when the building development was already so stabilised that it became more cost-effective to build new structures to provide access to the raised portico, rather than rebuilding or building the whole house.

Interestingly, this process is did, with few exceptions, not find its evidence in written sources, so researchers looking for other arguments to support this theory formulate their hypotheses rather cautiously. Among these exceptions is the agreement between the Freiburg city authorities and the owner of the house at 36 Grand Rue. In this town, only six houses on this very street are provided with porticoes, and the last three once bordering the gate have high porticoes. In 1547, negotiations were held with the owner of the above-mentioned house, Ulrich von Englisburg, as the regrading of the street made it necessary to rebuild the eastern elevation of his house. An agreement was reached in which the town undertook to bear half the cost. The agreement mentions the need to deepen the street due to unfavourable mudslides.



<sup>39</sup> L. Blondel, *Un aspect caractéristique de l'architecture de Genève: les dômes*, "Geneva" Vol. 13 (1965), p. 50, Fig. 1.



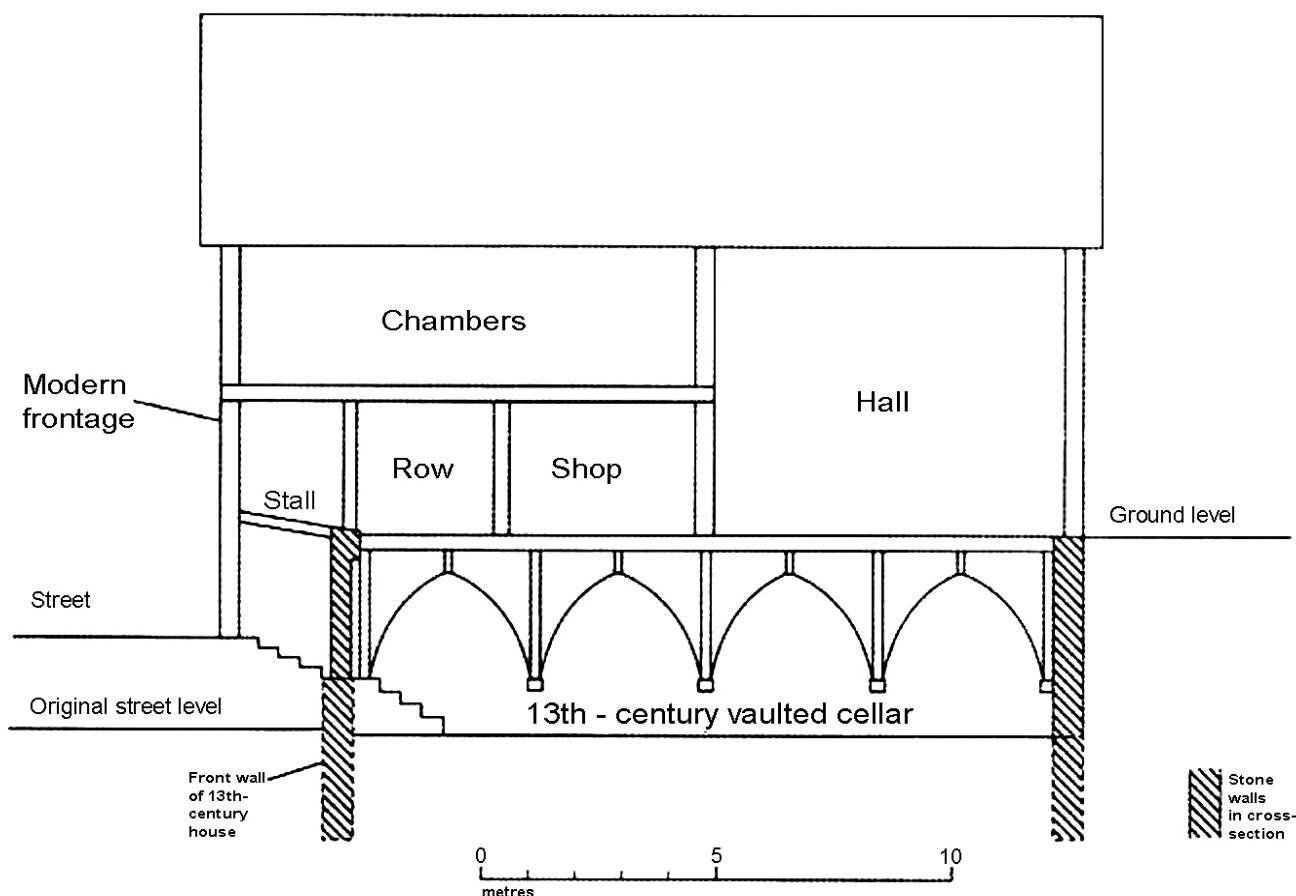
<sup>40</sup> See D. Keene, "Portici" in England, [in:] *I portici di Bologna nel contesto europeo*, Ed. F. Bocchi, R. Smurra, Bologna 2015.

A very late written evidence related to the making of the levelling between 1817 and 1831 concerns the town of Avenches in the canton of Vaud. The starting point for this correction of the gradient was the desire to run a new road linking Payerne and Murten, called the Nouveau Grand Chemin de Berne, centrally across the Grand Rue in Avenches. To this end, the city gate Porte de Payerne was demolished. As the Grand Rue lies on a hill, the gradient on both sides had to be reduced. The earth removal was a minimum of 50 cm and a maximum of 4.50 m. The houses were partially undermined and some were also completely rebuilt. The elevations of the portico and the entrances to the houses remained where they were, but the portico became a high portico.

For the town of Burgdorf, where houses with high porticoes also exist, there are no written sources attesting to the far-reaching levelling of the ground. Nevertheless, researchers point to other arguments, including the discovery of an early wooden building within one of the tenements, sited at the level of the floors of today's porticoes. This would prove that the porticoes originally ran at the level of the then much higher ground level. Based on an analysis of the time of construction of the various elements of the town, it was furthermore considered that the deepening must have taken place between 1642 and 1715. It is also known that the rooms under the porticoes of houses No. 9 and 11 were used as storerooms and stables in the 18th c., so they must have been directly accessible from the street at that time.

As can be seen, therefore, the high porticoes and "trottoirs" in Switzerland were probably not a pre-designed element aimed at aesthetic effect, but rather a secondary result of modern interventions in the topography of the city and the need to adapt the development process to this. Perhaps somewhat earlier, such interventions were carried out in the rapidly expanding Bern. In Thun, the Obere Hauptgasse section with elevated pavements was, according to Ulrike Schröer's hypothesis, created by developing the area intended for the continuation of the portico row with small additions, due to the lack of resources to build a proper portico at a time of economic stagnation in the town. It was also an easier solution compared to the alternative of carving out cellars in the rock under or behind the house. It is also important to note that the former portico rows, providing direct access to the portico area and ground floor of the house, have now become more of a private area providing access to the houses, while the commercial impetus has moved lower and has been operated through the former cellars.

Different origins and structural model of high porticoes are illustrated by houses in English Chester<sup>40</sup>. Called Rows, they present a unique variation of what is implicit in the meaning of the word, namely sequences of adjacent shops selling items of a single speciality. In this case, however, the retail outlets have been elevated to the



11. Cross-section illustrating the principal stages in the development of the Rows in Chester from the 13th to the 17th century. Photo from: D. Keene, "Portici" in England, [in:] *I portici di Bologna nel contesto europeo*, Ed. F. Bocchi, R. Smurra, Bologna 2015, p. 201, Fig. 4

height of the first floor. This has been convincingly interpreted by Derek Keene, who sees it as a result of the difficulty of digging cellars into the rocky ground, which led to a higher foundation level for their walls and the extent of their vaults, while the rising ground at the rear of the site and the remaining ruins of Roman buildings made it difficult to transport goods from the back. The building was thus constructed with the "cellar" either merely slightly dipped into the ground or placed at street level, accessed from this street by an entrance and lit by windows. These spaces were often used for the storage of wine, the trade of which in Chester was an important part of the town's economy. The rear of the cellar might then have been storage, the front as better lit for serving customers. The loss of the commercial frontage at street level was compensated for by moving it to galleries high up, and accessible from the street by stairs, providing access to the front rooms of the houses. This arrangement of the portico house in Chester probably developed as early as the mid-13th c. or slightly later. Originally separate private porticoes, over time they

were connected through arched openings in the stone walls dividing the houses, thus creating continuous passageways convenient for passers-by. Some preserved arches between the porticoes date to the late 13th century.

Due to the rising of the street level as a result of deposition processes, over time there was a need for new steps or the extension of existing steps leading down to the cellars, a process which resulted in their greater intrusion into the open street than before. To shield these descents, the front walls of the houses were moved forward and thus started to occupy part of the street space [Fig. 11].

Such an extension created additional space at the level of the high porticoes, on the side of the aperture providing light to the porticoes, in the form of a deep windowsill (a stall), providing new opportunities for displaying items of trade.

\* \* \*

At first glance, the porticoes that have survived to this day in Silesia and the Kłodzko Land show a far-reaching structural and aesthetic uniformity. They surround mainly market squares on the level of the ground floor and are accessible directly from a square or street. Usually brick, vaulted, open with porticoes supported by pillars or, more rarely, columns, they provide entrance to the shops located in the ground floor. This homogeneity is illusory, however, and the deeper we delve into the history of burgher construction, the more convoluted and yet fascinating the history of the portico appears. The European context additionally makes it possible to consider the Silesian portico as belonging to a large European family of towns with an element that is extremely widespread and whose origins go back very far into the past. Many common features and local differences can be identified here. As it seems, therefore, the porticoes of our region should always be analysed in a broader view. With this approach, unique phenomena such as the high porticoes presented here can be distinguished.

Symptomatic for the study of bourgeois houses in Silesia is the randomness of sources that can be used to reconstruct the former way of dwelling. This is clearly shown by the three towns presented at the beginning of this article: Bolków, with its largely preserved houses and a scarcity of written sources at the same time, extremely dilapidated after 1945. Kłodzko, where the analysis of the material must give way fortunately to well-preserved archival material, and Świdnica, which is one of the best archaeologically and architecturally studied cities in Poland. The combination of all these data undoubtedly gives an overall picture of the phenomenon of high porticoes as a specific one, but we are still faced with a particular incompatibility of sources.

Despite the existence of premises that lend credence to the hypothesis of even medieval origins of the erection of high porticoes in Silesia and the Kłodzko Land, in the case of high porticoes we can without much risk speak merely of their confirmed existence in the 16th century. However, they are always a testimony to creative solutions aimed at solving problems resulting from the towns' awkward topography: the location on the steep slope of the castle hill, the need to level the sharp gradient of the terrain. They are also an expression of the intention to maximise the usable area of houses located in difficult sites.

The examples presented from contemporary Poland, Italy, Switzerland and England make it possible to recognise that high porticoes and terraced walkways as an idea, which did not originate in a particular region, although they are particularly popular or simply well-preserved in Switzerland. At the same time, the interpretation presented in the article of the genesis of high porticoes in that area is the most controversial to translate to our conditions. We have no evidence so far of such far-reaching levelling of squares and streets that led to the exposure of the originally underground storeys, although we cannot exclude such a process either. We can consider this kind of action at least in the case of Kłodzko, where a section of the portico row unnaturally stopped, and its peculiar continuation was a terraced pavement at the corner of the market square. One can imagine that the water flowing from the castle hill, along Grodzisko Street, could have caused considerable damage there. The regrading of eastern Czeska Street would allow water to drain towards Tumska Street as it is today. However, this hypothesis would be difficult to verify without extensive archival research and excavation.

Regardless of all the practical considerations of erecting high porticoes, we must not forget the aesthetic issues, such as breaking up the elevated and most exposed frontages in the urban landscape with porticoes. The high porticoes were also an excellent place for displaying, for example, manifestations of devotion. In some arches of the porticoes in Czeska Street in Kłodzko there were sculptures of Mary with Child, St. John Nepomucene and the Crucifix [Fig. 5]. In Bolków, in the 18th c., altars were constructed under the porticoes of houses for processions to celebrate the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ<sup>41</sup>.

The article should conclude with a postulate not to lose the last high porticoes in Silesia and to take care of the unique town-houses of Bolków provided with them, and at the same time to carry out further research on this topic.

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#### Słowa kluczowe

Śląsk, Ziemia Kłodzka, Bolków, Kłodzko, Świdnica, architektura mieszczańska, kamienica, podcienia

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#### Keywords

Silesia, Kłodzko Land, Bolków, Kłodzko, Świdnica, burgher architecture, town-house, porticoes



<sup>41</sup> See B. G. Steige, *Bolkenhainsche Denkwürdigkeiten, aus Handschriften, Urkunden und Büchern*, Hirschberg 1795, p. 653.



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### Summary

#### **RADOSŁAW GLIŃSKI (University of Wrocław) / High porticoes – a phenomenon from Bolkow, Klodzko and Swidnica in a European context**

The aim of this article is to describe the phenomenon of high porticoes and related terraced walkways, motifs drawn from the broad issue of portico architecture. The author focuses on existing examples of high porticoes in Silesia and the Klodzko Land, or those evidenced by archival and archaeological documentation (Bolkow, Klodzko, Swidnica). Selected examples were analysed in terms of similarities in the solutions applied, but also differences in form and function. Archival research, analysis of preserved cartography and iconography, as well as documentation from architectural and archaeological surveys provide a general overview of this phenomenon.

Examples from Silesia and the Klodzko Land are furthermore presented in a European context. Similar examples can also be found in Poland (Bielsko-Biala, Przemysl), but also throughout Europe, i.e. in Italy (Brisighella), in Switzerland (e.g. Bern, Erlach, Avenches, Thun, Burgdorf) and in the United Kingdom (Chester).

The examples presented do not form an aesthetically and structurally homogeneous group. High porticoes seem to have been used particularly readily to bridge terrain differences in cities. However, their form, time of creation and legal aspect were always adapted to local conditions.