

**Ivan Roth, *Javni spomenici sv. Ivana Nepomuka u istočnoj Slavoniji*  
[*Public Monuments to Saint John of Nepomuk in Eastern Slavonia*]  
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### Summary

The veneration of Saint John of Nepomuk was in its beginnings – even before the formal canonization of the saint in 1729 – recorded only on the local level in the territory of the Prague diocese. By associating the saint with the legend of the secrets of the confessional and its anti-reformation backing, the veneration of the saint rose from the local level, to that of a cult characteristic of the entire territory of the Habsburg Monarchy. At the instigation of the Habsburg rulers Leopold I and Joseph I, St. John Nepomuk was beatified (1721) and canonized (1729), consequently becoming a kind of patron saint of the entire dynasty and the Monarchy. Precisely this sort of treatment of saints by the government leaders was crucial to the diffusion of his veneration throughout the territory of the Monarchy, inasmuch as the nobility, church members and citizen groups expressed both devotion to the saint and gratitude and loyalty to the dynasty. Devotion to St. John of Nepomuk was mostly expressed by erecting public monuments with depictions of the saint; this practice became deeply rooted and eventually surpassed the ecclesiastical and political scope that had initially been behind his veneration. However, political turmoil was constantly present even after the dissolution of the Monarchy; consequently, certain public monuments became victims of political iconoclasm while the tradition of veneration eventually fell into oblivion.

A multitude of statues and chapels dedicated to St. John of Nepomuk and erected in Slavonia during the artistically fertile 18th century testify to how deeply rooted the saint was in local tradition. Masses, altars and church bells were dedicated to him, and processions were common, in which the public statues were essential stations on the route. Thus St. John of Nepomuk became the only saint of the modern era whose veneration had taken on such a scale that it surpassed the cult of saints present in the tradition since medieval times.



Research into public monuments of St. John of Nepomuk necessitated primarily an iconological approach and showed that, regardless of the different holders of the Slavonian landed estates, the erection of public monuments to a saint almost always had a strong political background. When the veneration of the saint became a tradition (which took place soon after the canonization), members of religious orders and civic groups as well as wealthy individuals started to erect statues. Thus, public statues of St. John of Nepomuk were erected throughout Slavonia, Baranya and Syrmia – from Požega to Zemun, from Batina to Slavonski Brod. This work includes also examples from Požega due to its significance, although Požega geographically is not part of eastern Slavonia. However, there are still many uncertainties about the statues from Požega that should be resolved by further research.