

Summary

THE LANGUAGE OF THE *JESLIČKY*
BY FRIDRICH BRIDELIUS

The language of the new hymns collected in *Jesličky* by Fridrich Bridelius draws on the tradition of the highly developed Czech language of the late 16th century. This is clearly visible in the range of effects produced by the sound shifts experienced by Czech during the Early Modern era, enabling a degree of stylistic differentiation ($y > ej$, $ú- > ou-$, $é > í$ and prosthetic $v-$). The morphology and syntactic structure of the new hymns includes some of the changes which affected spoken Czech in the 17th century, and which penetrated into the written language only slowly – the blurring of gender differences in the nominative plural declension of adjectives and pronouns, the unification of instrumental plural adjectival and pronominal suffixes in the form *-ma*, the stabilization of the form *si* as the dative of the genderless reflexive pronoun *se*, the penetration of compound declension into singular forms of possessive adjectives, the stabilization of the second person singular *bys* as the conditional auxiliary verb, the violation of concord in transgressive forms, the retreat of the negative genitive, and the constitution of the category of frequentatives in verbs. However, in addition to these features, the texts of *Jesličky* also preserve certain traditional linguistic forms typical of written communication: the masculine and neuter instrumental plural of the type *pány / městy*, the genitive plural suffix *-ův* of the type *pánův*, the third person singular present tense form of the athematic verb *jest*, preterite forms such as *nesl jest / nesli jsou*, and the use of the antepreterite or the negative genitive. This symbiosis of progressive and traditional forms in the texts not only shows that the author of the hymnal was attempting to use a high style that was at the same time comprehensible to contemporary readers; it also confirms that post-White Mountain authors drew naturally on the language of the previous era and developed it creatively, well aware of the wide functional range of linguistic means at their disposal. The language of *Jesličky* contains a minimum of clearly dialectal or potentially dialectal forms, which can be localized in Central and Eastern Bohemia. This low frequency of dialect features can be viewed as 1) an indirect confirmation of Bridelius' probable authorship (he came from Eastern Bohemia and

lived and worked mainly in Central Bohemia), and 2) a reflection of the fact that Baroque authors tended to deliberately avoid the use of dialectal forms.

Keywords: development of the Czech language; the Czech language of Baroque period; Czech hymns; historical orthography; Fridrich Bridelius

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