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Hygienic facilities of the Theatine college in Thunovská Street at Malá Strana in Prague

ANNOTATION

Palaeobotanic analysis of the macroremains gained during an archaeological excavation of a newly discovered Baroque cesspit brought a number of new information, which had to be set within chronological and social context. Dating of the cesspit function is based on variol finds from its infill, mainly reasonably datable pipes, coins and ring signets. Also the quality of the building construction of the cesspit required investigation in a greater detail with comparison with the habitual practice of the period.

SUMMARY

The aim of this article is to publish the finds' circumstances and chronological classification of the palaeobotanic macroremains samples analysed by Věra Čulíková and published also in this volume. This evaluation takes into account also the wider context. The samples were taken during an archaeological excavation of the former Theatine order home in Prague (Malá Strana, Thunovská Street, house No. 192/III; fig. 1), where a Baroque cesspit was revealed. The samples came from the layers 97, 96 and from the bottom of the layer 94 (fig. 7), which all belonged to the period, when the cesspit was in function and faecal sediments were accumulating in it. Afterwards it was dusted by lime (layers 90 and 91) and backfilled by brown soil (layers 82 and 83). Excavation of the lower infill of the cesspit (the faecal layers) was done in mechanical layers 94-96, only the lowest layer 97 was slightly different, more solid and without stones.

The Theatine order was introduced to Bohemia in 1665 by the top imperial officer in Bohemia of that period, Bernard Ignác Jan count of Martinice. He first settled them on his land behind Prague ramparts; in 1669 he managed to buy a palace area within the town, directly below the Prague castle, where the Theatines moved in 1672. Presumably in the intervening time the Renaissance palace was modified to a Baroque college. This opinion can be supported by analogical action of this founder on other foundations, since he introduces convents into structurally completed buildings. In the Theatine college also hygienic facilities of quite high standard for the period were included during the rebuilding. Detailed characteristics of them are enabled due to the archaeological excavation and the building history survey. They were situated in the east wing of the home (fig. 1: C) as a separate building ca 10,5 × 7 m adjacent to the main building by a small risalit incorporating toilettes already in the Renaissance period (fig. 13). At the ground floor there was one toilette and probably other services, below the floor of the ground floor there was a large latrine (fig. 9, 13: A, 15). Above the low space of the ground floor (cf. fig. 4) there was a mezzanine with collective toilettes room, along which a loggia ensured ventilation and light (fig. 13: B, 16, 39). Above the mezzanine there was a floor at the same level as the first floor of the main building with the refectory. Here, at the 1st floor we presume a lavatorium in the east building, without the loggia. The college is situated on a sheer slope, water could be led to the east wing from the top; a part of a Baroque stone gutter was found at a suitable place. The revealed cesspit was dug and built according to a project, retrospectively reconstructed (fig. 10), small deflections occurred during its realisation (fig. 11). The cesspit project (mainly the chutes) determined the position of the toilette seats at the upper floor. We presume that the project was entrusted to one of the two architects working for the count of Martinice at that period. Judging from the semi-circular shape of the arcades we suggest Carel Lurago since he uses this shape very often. However the author of the conception of the hygienic facility cannot be determined. Judging from the high standard of this facility for personal hygiene we presume that the composition idea came from the Italian members of the Theatine order from Rome, who administered the Prague college at the beginning and could be aware of new architectonic trends in this field, if they have not developed it themselves.

The period of use of the cesspit can be estimated from the finds, excavated from it. The primary function of the cesspit was not a rubbish dump since not a single vessel was found complete. From 7,5 thousands pottery fragments only 29 vessels could be completed in sections from the rim to the base. Most probably from time to time some rubbish from the site really used as a rubbish heap was thrown into the cesspit. Three vessels so far have

been reconstructed from the Muskau-Triebel production area (fig. 18, 35, 36, 37). Interesting data were gained from the collection of pipes (fig. 20–22). Only a single one came from the backfill of the cesspit after the termination of its function (layer 82), other 7 pipes were found in the lowest layer 97. Three of them were produced in the period 1660–1700 in the Dutch Gouda centre. The amount of technical glassware comes most probably from the pharmacy, its service is indicated also by the palaeobotanic analysis (fig. 24, 26); a curiosity is the hygienic glassware (chamber pots, urinals). The finds of coins come from the period of Leopold I (1657–1705), two counting jettons of Louis XIV (1661–1715) made in the interval 1663–1709 are of special interest (fig. 27). An unusual archaeological find is a figure made probably of natural wax (fig. 30). A source of data for the chronological determination of the period of use was gained in the collection of 340 signet fragments for correspondence sealing. 195 of them were identified, belonging to 54 noble families and five religious orders or ecclesiastical dignitaries. 18 owners of the seal devices could be recognised by name – mainly holders of the Golden Fleece order, or according to alliance coats of arms or monograms. Coats of arms, which could not be identified and which most probably belong to foreigners, are depicted in the group G-5 in larger scale. (All fragments are planned to be published in larger scale on the web page of this journal.)

The attempt to determine the chronological order of the layers (tab. 4) has following results: The function of the cesspit started in 1672 after the takeover of the house and surrounding gardens by the Theatine order. Sedimentation of the lowest layer 97 continued after 1680 (a pipe) but no finds are present, which could be definitely dated after 1685. The following layer 96 could accumulate with rough estimation for another ca 15 years, to the period shortly after 1702. The layer 95 could accumulate to the period before 1715 when it was covered by the layer 94. The importance of dating the layer 94 is given by its position as the latest layer of faecal sediments. We attempted to determine the end of its sedimentation from several points of view. The signets found in it give a post quem date 1715 and the ante quem date 1733 ad 1734. Further information is given by the building history survey and dendrochronology, which give evidence for a rebuilding of the hygienic house during the 18th century when a wall was founded above the east end of the cesspit, interfering with the toilette room in the mezzanine. During this reconstruction ceiling beams were used from timber cut in 1717–1719. Afterwards the cesspit probably ceased its function. Also historical events have to be taken into account. We presume a connection among the backfill of the cesspit by lime, and the large plague, which hit Prague in 1713–1715, and fear of the plague infection and the crowning of the emperor Charles VI to Bohemian king, which was postponed due to the plague and did not take place until 1723. Presumably the smell rising from the large cesspit in the college directly into the emperor's castle palace was not such a common thing for the guests of the crowning as before so measures had to be taken also to exclude the possibility of the plague infection. Connection between the hygiene of the town (disposal of the barrels with rubbish including faeces behind the town ramparts) and the plague epidemic (typhus in Munich) was already known and some European towns were therefor equipped with canalisation. We presume that in part of Malá Strana situated below the Castle a local canalisation was installed to drain the sludge further from the Castle. Its installation could relate to an unrealised proposal from the Leopold I period (there was a large plague epidemic also in his period in 1680), which planned the canalisation pipe through the streets Úvoz and Vlašská at the south end of the west part of the Hradčany slope. The termination of the use of the cesspit in the Prague Theatine college latest in 1723 corresponds so far with all chronological presumptions based on dendrochronology and on the evaluation of the signet assemblage and other archaeological finds from this cesspit.

Fig. 1. Prague 1-Malá Strana, Thunovská No.192/III. Area between Zámecké schody and Nerudova Street on an orthophotomap and on the Map of real estate evidence (cadastre). **A** – the main building of the Theatine order home; **B** – west Renaissance addition, later a refectory; **C** – east Baroque addition – hygienic quarters, currently “the east wing”; **D** – courtyard; **E, F, G, H** – garden areas.

Fig. 2. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. The three storey building of the east wing from the south.

Fig. 3. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. The Baroque cesspit on a groundplan of the ground floor of the north part of the main building and of the east wing.

Fig. 4. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III, east wing. View from the east into the entrance space in front of the cesspit, entrance from the courtyard on the left. Confined ground floor spaces and very bad structural state is apparent.

Fig. 5. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III, east wing. Section of the faecal sediment in the lower part of the latrine. Compacted coherent, solid and slimy layers 94–97 (cf. section 11, fig. 7). Degraded plaster apparent on the walls.

Fig. 6. Unconventional floating unit with special system preventing the sludge blocking the canalisation and with an easy dis/assembling construction for a simple manipulation during frequent removal of the sludge. For the construction of this simple, very useful unit we are grateful to Stanislav Řehák. The photo is from the testing period with clean water.

Fig. 7. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III, east wing. Archaeological situation: section 11 – generalised section of the cesspit and its infill. Below the concrete floor of the ground floor (layer 98 + 99) there was building rubble (l. 81), covering layers 82 + 83 with the character of common backfills. Between layers 82 and 83 on the east side of the cesspit lay a single rotted broken plank (depicted). White layers 90 + 91 belong presumably to lime disinfection after the termination of the latrine function. Lower – green – layers depict faecal sediments (l. 94 + 97). The column 89 shows the origin of the finds gathered by the firm SPELEO–Řehák before the beginning of the excavation. Red – schematic brick lining of the pit.

Fig. 8. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III, east wing. Brown soil layers of common settlement character, relatively loose (l. 82 + 83).

Fig. 9. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. The groundplan of the Baroque cesspit in the Theatine college. Hatched – north and south outer walls of the room. Red brick walling, falling line showing the slanted sides. At the bottom a small plinth (cf. section 11). A hollow cut into the bedrock on the bottom – probably a pit for collecting water during the construction. Lighter stripes in the upper line – the chutes, dashed – beam slots, green – position of the sections, **A** – section 11.

Fig. 10. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Presumed way of the cesspit construction according to the note 16 – the reverse project. Presumably the aim was to determine the disposition of the seats in the toilette room on the floor above. Presumed author of the project – Carlo Lurago, projected in Bohemian ells.

Fig. 11. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Projection of geometrically constructed reverse project (blue) and the realised constructions (red) – cf. fig. 9.

Fig. 12. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. The ground floor of the former Berka from Dubé Renaissance palace. **Red** – Gothic walling, **blue** – Renaissance. The arrow points to the entrance at that time. On the other – north side – a small toilette risalit.

Fig. 13. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Groundplan of the ground floor of the college (A) with the latrine below the floor and the mezzanine (B) with collective toilettes. An open loggia along the toilette.

Fig. 14. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Groundplans of the east wing floors with numbers of the rooms used in 2010 – cf. notes 34, 35.

Fig. 15. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III, east wing. View from the west into the latrine after the excavation. In the front top later brick relieving arch, above it concrete floor with lit up refraction.

Fig. 16. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. View from the north to the south outside wall of the east wing. A pillar between two blocked loggia arcades.

Fig. 17. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. A selection of the artefacts from the cesspit with the links to their position within the stratigraphy.

Fig. 18. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Stoneware vessels made in Lausitz production centres Muskau or Triebel in the 17th century. **1** – jug, height 29,5 cm; **2 – 6** sided vase with cobalt glaze, height 24,5 cm; **3** – spouted pitcher, height 31 cm. Graphic scale = 5 cm.

Fig. 19. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. A sample of completed pottery vessels from the cesspit infill, stratigraphically assorted (according to context numbers = vr.). Graphic scale = 5 cm.

Fig. 20. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Pottery pipes numbered with part of the finds' code. The stem end of the pipe -82-D is vertical and ground smooth. Vr. = layer. Reduced, production stamps in larger version keep to the scale 1 : 1.

Fig. 21. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Photographs of selected pipes.

Fig. 22. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Production stamps of master pipe makers from Gouda in large scale: **1** – stag, pipe -4-B; **2** – shamrock, pipe -82-D; **3** – Milkmaid, pipe -82-E. The size of the drawn stamp is 1 : 1. Colour is artificially modified.

Fig. 23. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Glass lenses from the beginning of the 18th century – both 2011/3 – bag number 72, layer 94.

Fig. 24. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Technical glassware, mainly vessels probably connected with the pharmacy service. Assorted to contexts in the stratigraphic position.

Fig. 25. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Table glassware. Apart from the thick-sided small glasses is the assemblage complete. The number of the Bohemian crystal fragments with incised decoration is final.

Fig. 26. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Hygienic (chamber pot, urinal), technical and 1× table (?) glassware.

Fig. 27. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Two different counting jetton with the portrait of Louis XIV, made by Lazar Gottlieb Lauffer (master 1663 – ± 1709) from Nuremberg. Found in the layer 96.

Fig. 28. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. A sample of small wooden artefacts including small cork with wooden thread and wooden tables perhaps for the use in the pharmacy – cf. note 71.

Fig. 29. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Porcelain bowl of undetermined provenience, found by the surface of the backfill layer 81.

Fig. 30. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Part of a small figure of a negro (?). Found in the layer 94, discarded ca 1710–1720s. Probably natural wax, perhaps ozokerit (?).

Fig. 31. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Complete photograph series of all signets with comments. Pictures of the signets are assorted in categories from A to H. Categories (with various numbers of signets) are presented in groups so the comment was as close as possible to relevant signets. Therefore one group = 1 strap with one row of signets (f.e. A-1). In one group (strap) there are signets belonging to one or more often larger number of families. Families are divided in one group by full line, the order of the family within the group can be counted (most often up to five) and that is stated in the comment by a number behind the slash (/2:). Within a certain family more than one type was identified. Several types (or various owners of the seals) within one family are separated by thin dotted line. Verifiably there is evidence of the use of several seal device types by a single person at the same time (f.e. B. I. from Martinice). Numbers by the photographs = numbers of signets, additively assigned during the excavation. Enlarged 2×.

~ **A 1–8.** Category A – signets of aristocratic families of which the sons were members of the Theatine order.

~ **B 1.** Category B – aristocratic signets with uncertain identification, probable relation to the order (/1, /3) or to a family, whose member entered the order later (/2).

~ **C 1.** Category C – signets of aristocratic families, whose members supported the Theatine order.

~ **D 1.** Category D – signets of the aristocratic families, whose relation to the Theatine order is not documented by written evidence.

~ **E 1–2.** Category E – signets of ecclesiastic dignitaries and orders.

~ **F-1.** Category F – signets of uncertain identification without any relation to the Theatine order.

~ **G-1.** Category G – unidentified signets. Group 1 – persons without a predicate, probably burghers. A recent imprint by the seal device made by the authors ~ **G-2.** Category G – unidentified signets. Group 2 – Italian aristocratic families.

~ **G-3.** Category G – unidentified signets. Group 3 – Aristocratic families from France and Austria.

~ **G-4.** Category G – unidentified signets. Group 4 – inscription with monograms.

~ **G-5.** Category G – unidentified signets. Group 4 – signets of aristocratic families, probably not resident in Bohemia. Assorted in numerical order 1–340, enlarged 2,5×.

~ **H.** Category H – signets of the Theatine order members. 29 types recognised.

Fig. 32. Rokytnice in Orlické mountains – the castle. Coats-of-arms of the Nostitz family on the left, on the right the Mettych family from Čečov.

Fig. 33. A topographical signet hypothetically depicting the church in Skočice (1677), Strakonice distr., under the patronage of Polyxena Ludmila countess of Sternberg, nephew of the founder of the Theatine order in Bohemia, Bernard Ignatius count of Martinice.

Fig. 34. A sample of identified signets within the groups from A-1 to G-4 and H in larger scale (2,5×).

Fig. 35. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Stoneware vase, detail of the fragment, cf. fig. 18: 2.

Fig. 36. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Stoneware pitcher, detail of the fig. 18: 3.

Fig. 37. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Stoneware jug, detail of the fig. 18: 1.

Fig. 38. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. An attempt of the reconstruction of the Baroque disposition projected into the current state. An open gate on the right is visible through the entrance from the street. The former courtyard is encountered by the main college building (left) with a tall narrow toilette risalit (centre) and the east wing adjacent to it – originally the hygienic quarters for the brethren. The line between the risalit and the hygienic quarters is of

demonstrative nature. Material of the parapet wall of the loggia in the mezzanine (along the toilette room) cannot be stated because of the infill, here wood. In the place of the last current floor we presume the timber roof truss.

Fig. 39. A scene from the courtyard of the Baroque Prague Theatine order home at Malá Strana by the architect Ondřej Šefců (2013).

Fig. 40. Relation scheme of some members of the Prague Theatine college presented in greatly reduced family trees, showing only the family members significant for the information. Thick line at the bottom emphasizes the married couple and the following generation. Thick line at the top (at Hložek and Račín family) connects the siblings where there was no space for vertical links with their parents, or the siblings are linked with a thin line in the upper third zone. The Theatines and the year of entry into the order in green. (From available sources and literature compiled by J. Čiháková and M. Müller, digitalised by M. Ďurica).

Table 1. Prague, Thunovská No.192/III. Parameters of the cesspit discovered in the east wing of the Prague Theatine order home (p. 124).

Table 2. Identification, localisation, dating and provenience of the pipes from the cesspit on the site in Prague, Thunovská No.192/III (p. 138).

Table 3. List of the signets fragments with identifiable part of the seal field (tiny fragments excluded). Columns 3 + 4 are linked to the “coat-of-arms catalogue” by Hrdinová 2013. Determined by T = J. Tovačovský, M = M. Müller (author). Owner of the seal device: if not stated otherwise (T), determined by Müller. Category: signet category according to the specification on the page 144. Position: location where to look for the signet picture and comments, assorted in categories – a link to the fig. 31. Signet fragments will be published in large scale on the web page of this journal (p. 145–149).

Table 4. Absolute data of individual layers of the stratigraphy within the excavated cesspit based on the finds analysis (p. 173).

Translated by Linda and Patrick Foster